

The Horror! The Horror!

## Harry Potter and the Kurtz Estate, Chapter 1

A/N: Rorscach's Blot started a fun little series of Harry-in-Africa stories. It made me think of one of my favorite books. Prepare for a strange crossover: Harry Potter and The Heart of Darkness. Humorous!

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Harry had seen Death...and escaped...and he certainly wasn't going to wait for it again on Privet Drive with 'relatives' he'd rather embalm than visit with.

It was the first day of vacation, one hour after returning from the train station, and Harry was already resolved that he was leaving. To do what? He didn't know. Perhaps he'd hide out with his godfather. Harry could learn to be an animagus so that he could feast on rats, too.

Perhaps he'd disappear onto the streets. With an Invisibility Cloak, Harry would be an exceptional pickpocket.

Or...perhaps he'd do something so dangerous, so stupid that it was bound to take his mind from Voldemort and his darkling clowns.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The real estate agent in Diagon Alley seemed really nice. That should have been his first clue. Many of his seemingly nice, or inoffensive, or sweet professors at school had tried to kill, memory charm, or kidnap Harry, after all, but the vicious bat in the dungeon never really had.

"So, dearie, let me get this straight," the sweet old lady said, as she knitted a black sweater. "You wish to purchase some place to live outside of Britain?"

"Correct. I'd prefer they didn't have any underage magic laws, either."

“Right.” The woman then frowned at a series of particularly difficult stitches she had to make.

“Well, let’s check out your qualifications then. Have a job?”

“Err, no. I’m still in school I suppose.”

“Alright. You can finish up your studies through owl post lessons; lot of people do. Do you want a job? Can’t get a house to live in without a job.”

“Sure. If I could get out of this crazy country, why not?”

“Excellent. Any type of work you’d prefer?”

“Something hands on, I’d guess. I’m not a big reader, but I can cook, garden, and do pretty much anything else.”

“Interesting. Practical minded soul, eh? How’re your grades in Herbology and Care of Magical Creatures?”

“Well, Herbology as it’s taught is kinda boring, but I get an A or an EE each term. I’ve got an O going in Care.”

The old woman smiled and stopped knitting. “Ever been to Africa?”

Harry didn’t notice the shiver of utter terror making its way down his own back. He was still too interested in getting the hell out of Dodge. “Err, no. I’ve never been anywhere.”

“Fine, fine. How much do you have to spend? On your house, that is.”

Harry opened a worn money pouch. “Err, forty two galleons?”

“I see.” The woman began flipping pages in a massive book on her desk. “Well, that really limits our choices. I could see if the Weasleys would want to sell, but you want to get out of the country. Oh...oh, here it is. The old Kurtz estate...in the Congo. I had completely forgotten about that place. It’s been on the books at this agency for quite some time. Between me and you, kid, it’s been in the book

since old Kurtz died. Got a bit of a reputation as a 'hard-to-sell' place. I can give it to you for a song...and those galleons, of course."

"Do you have a picture?"

"No. It's a decent amount of land, but the house is a little rustic. Kurtz was a squib, you see, so that's how we have the listing. But you're a wizard, so I'll give you the Realtor's Guide to Household Charms and you can fix it right up."

"What does rustic mean?" Harry asked.

"Well...it's a bit run down. Tin roof might still be in one piece, but it's possible the mudbricks need some, er, maintenance. It's also sort of small...and there is no bathroom."

"Hmm. Is it bigger than a broom cupboard?"

"Oh yes. The compound's big enough to store a few tons of ivory. Old Kurtz used to work for one of these Belgian firms, I think, buying ivory from the locals. Of course, there's not as many elephants now nor as much demand. But you could do very well gathering materials from magical creatures, you know...for potions, rituals, wand making, and such."

"Really. I'd always wondered who gathered up the ingredients. Plants can be grown, but who is foolish enough to try to capture nundu's breathe for a potion?"

"Well, sir, to be blunt. You. That will probably be one of your bigger sellers. Not too many people want to risk their own skins just to make a beauty potion...but they'd buy nundu's breath if someone were selling it."

"Guess I'll have to see if there's a guide to potions ingredients at the book store."

"Well, I know that there's no realtor guide to potion ingredients." The woman laughed at her own lame joke. "Here's the book on household charms."

“How do I get to Africa?”

“Portkey, of course. The place is pretty remote.”

“I see. How would I get back if I needed to?”

“Learn to make a portkey.”

“I can do that?”

“Why not.”

Harry pushed his money bag across the table. “Sounds good enough for me. And thanks for the book. Can I come back and pick up my portkey at five? I think I’ll have a lot to take care of before I leave for my new home.”

“Excellent. I will be here.”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The realtor watched the foolish boy walk away. Vengeance would be hers. The brat had been involved in getting one of Nick’s Philosopher’s Stones destroyed...so both she and her husband had had to fake their deaths...again...and start over. She’d loved being Perenelle, the wife of a famous, well respected wizard.

Now she was Hetty Bogrash, the crazy old biddy who sold real estate. It was embarrassing.

And poor Nick. He worked at Gringotts training and feeding their dragons. He had to shovel tons and tons of manure every day as the lowest guy on the totem pole. He was quite old – well over two thousand years old – and couldn’t move as fast as he used to. Hell, no one would have made Nicholas Flamel, at a reputed six hundred seventy one years old, shovel manure. Little did anyone know how old ‘Nicholas’ really was...what a series of indignities. And the goblins. They’d given her husband the most horrible of goblin nicknames, the only names the goblins ever revealed to humans.

Cockrot.

His goblin nickname was Cockrot.

Every goblin referred to Trellis Bogrash, her husband's proper name, as Cockrot.

Unfair. It wasn't his fault that they couldn't have children together. When he had the 'problem' centuries ago, no one knew about communicable diseases. It was a perfectly honest mistake. Nick swore the prostitutes in Pompeii were the cleanest he'd ever known. Who knew?

And the goblins had to mock him for it.

But she would have her vengeance on the Potter boy. He was a lazy little cretin...completely incurious...far too trusting...and he'd be dead within hours of arriving in Africa.

Why, if the spiders, the snakes, the nundu, or the disease carrying mosquitos didn't do him in, then the wizarding clans who still practiced cannibalism would. Africa was an unforgiving place. That would teach Harry not to poke his nose into other people's affairs.

She began to cackle in glee as her fingers whipped through the rest of the black crepe sweater she was knitting. She was still cackling, but a bit more quietly, when Harry returned with a white owl, a three compartment trunk, and a new set of clothes. It looked good enough to bury him in.

"Here you go, sir. I hope you have a profitable time in Africa."

"I hope so, too."

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dear Sirius, the shaky handwriting began.

I hope you are well. I decided it was time for me to leave Britain. This nice lady sold me a house in...well, I won't say for now. It's a fixer upper, but it has potential.

The death grove out the back with a dozen old men who've been worked nearly to their graves is quite a nice touch. (I took them some water this morning and they were grateful.)

I especially like the hundreds of fence posts topped with what looks like well-aged human skulls. Gives the place some character.

I have been learning some cleaning charms to get my new home in shape. It's been abandoned for quite some time, aside from a few colonies of venomous spiders. The first colony bit me quite a few times, but it didn't really hurt. (I was bitten worse as a child at the Dursleys. We had quite a collection of nasty spiders under the stairs where I lived.)

I threw up a quick building for the spiders to live in as their venom sells for a pretty knut. I've decided to collect and sell rare potions ingredients. That nice real estate lady said it was a good plan and, so far, I agree.

I made my first sale of spider venom yesterday. I sold one little vial for a whole, live goat. Not sure what I can do with a goat – other than have it clear out some Devil's Snare growing in the jungle to the north, goats eat everything – but maybe I can resell it later.

I have finally mastered the Scourgify charm and have been experimenting with paint application charms. I have also been trying to make large area cooling charms work, but I haven't succeeded yet. Do you know anything about the space expansion charm? It's in the book I have, but it doesn't give instructions on how to perform it. All it says, actually, is "Use of this charm by a non-professional warder can result in dire, life-ending consequences."

Maybe I'll figure it out tomorrow.

Oh, apparently there are mosquitos here. I've just been bitten by a few dozen, as you can see from the blood smears on this letter. I

should go now as my hand and face are swelling up. Send a letter with Hedwig if you care to write.

Hope you are well and safe,

Harry

P.S. Given your animagus form, do you know anything about the grim? I thought they were Irish, but I seem to have a pack living just at the edge of my property. The little puppy living with the older ones is very cute, but his fur is about as sharp as razor blades. Any help? What do you think they might like to eat?

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Alastor Moody – the real Alastor Moody, not some poly-juiced fake; really! – stomped up to Number 4 Privet Drive under an Invisibility Cloak. He thought the whole exercise rather pointless, but he'd done worse as an Auror. For one whole month, he'd been responsible for staking out one of Millicent Bagnold's political opponents. The man had been a saint, a boring saint. He brought home groceries; he didn't bring home whores. He treated his wife well; he walked his crup in the morning and the evening. The Death Eaters got the man a few days after the illegal stakeout ended; a pity, the man would have been better than Fudge by far.

The Potter assignment was done in rotation, thankfully. After living in his own trunk in a drugged out stupor for most of a year, Alastor wasn't sure if he could manage another month long insertion as a spy. But a few hours here, a few hours there: no problem.

He scanned the backyard of the house first. No Potter. He'd been led to believe the Potter boy enjoyed gardening. Apparently not today.

Alastor began scanning the rest of the house. There was a horrifyingly ugly woman in the shower rubbing herself down with a cloth. There was a tubby boy with tits larger than overripe mangos doing...something...revolting with a dirty sock. And then there was a whale of a man doing...something...even more revolting with a piece of woman's lingerie.

Alastor had a strong stomach but he had reached nearly his limit. Sometimes his magical eye was more of a curse than a blessing.

Where the hell was Potter? Alastor wanted something less horrifying to focus on. He knew he was an ugly man – what with a missing eye, half a nose exploded off in a battle, and a leg that had been pulverized by Voldemort himself nearly fifteen years earlier – but he had nothing on these creatures living in this house.

Alastor waited until the beasties got some clothes on before he stomped up to the door and walked right in.

“Alright, where’s Potter?”

“That sniveling, useless....” The man’s mouth kept moving, but he found his tongue was quite missing.

“You, missy, tell me now.”

“He left.”

“When?”

“Maybe an hour or two after we brought him back from the train station....”

“You mean he’s been gone a full week and no one knew?”

“None of your kind ever checks up on him. Why would they? They dumped him here with us. No one cares about the little...boy.”

Alastor slung out two more spells to calm his anger. The vile woman had massive purple spots erupt on the surface of her skin. The slightly less massive whale of a man had his hands fashion themselves into hooves. He began shrieking until Alastor removed the kid’s tongue, too.



“Those spells should end in a day or three. You’ve been a lot of help, lady. By the way, your husband has an unhealthy interest in your lingerie. Have a good day.”

Alastor smiled as he stomped out of Number 4, just as the purple-spotted lady began shrieking at her ‘degenerate husband.’ Moody had caused every kind of hell...but he still had to track down Potter.

Where the hell could a fourteen year old get off to?

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dear Remus,

I hope you are well. You were my favorite teacher at Hogwarts even before I found out you knew my parents. I’m sorry I haven’t written since you left Hogwarts, but now I have a lot of time on my hands.

I have been writing to Padfoot as well. Hopefully you can help the old dog to get a better diet. If I decipher correctly what he’s been writing back, he’s become a connoisseur of fine rodents.

I have had a chance to see more of the world. For example, I got a chance to see my first lethifold. Thankfully the Patronus Charm you taught me is useful in driving them back. Did you know that lethifold skin can be used in several expensive potions? It’s a good thing I had a big, strong box with me when I discovered an entire cave full of the creatures.

I discovered something rather fascinating in Central Africa. They have every sort of magical creature there, but they have no werewolves. None at all. Never have. I asked around about it to a few people I met. One of them showed me this rather odd seed pod (see enclosed) which, in Swahili, is known as Wolf’s Release.

Perhaps it has some properties that might be useful to you. See if you can find a non-greasy-haired Potions Master to examine it for you. I hope it might be helpful. I cooked one up in a lethifold and batwing stew and it was quite tasty. I don’t think you have to worry about it poisoning you, but it does have a pungent, pepper-like flavor.

On another note, I finally saw a waterfall. I don't know the name of the place, but it was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. The water had to fall at least fifty meters. There were no tourists nearby, as it is quite remote, but I stumbled across it on one of my hikes looking for potions ingredients.

I have already become very successful as a potions ingredient supplier. I have a flock of twenty-two goats (which, thankfully, seem to enjoy Devil's Snare over any other food source), three bridal contracts, and a heap of useless ingots of gold, silver, and a box and a half of uncut diamonds. You can have all the gold in the world, but there's nothing to spend it on in the jungle. Perhaps the Gringotts goblins would find this stuff interesting.

Do you think I should start marketing my wares outside of the place where I currently am collecting? I know Fred and George Weasley were talking about setting up a mail order catalog to sell their pranks. It could work.

One more thing...oh no, I have to end the letter. That blasted nundu is back.

Hope you are well,

Harry

P.S. I read in one of my books that it takes a hundred wizards to subdue a nundu. Any idea how they do that? It's the fourth time this week the nundu has tried to get into the spider house I set up. Any ideas would be appreciated. Nundu breath and dung would sell quite well if I could get a steady supply.

P.P.S. Let me know if you find out anything about Wolf's Release...or if you need any lethifold skin. I think I'll sell it for a galleon an ounce. Bye!

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Wormtail stumbled into the Dark Lord's Lair (DLL in official correspondence). "Master. Master!"

"Come forward."

Wormtail began to walk through the crowd of mingling Death Eaters.

"On your knees."

'Damn,' Wormtail thought before dropping to his knees.

He got kicked more than a few times. Bella, she of the vicious smirk, attempted to lance through his thigh with the seven inch sharpened heel of her thigh-high, black leather boots.

He got it one good punch at Bella with his silver hand. The bitch would be lucky to be able to walk tomorrow.

"Wormtail, crab walk. Now!"

He flopped onto his back and began 'walking' toward his master. Now he could see everyone else snickering at him. It was not the way to treat a valued colleague.

"Rise, Wormtail. Report!"

"Master, I staked out Dumbledore's favorite shop in Hogsmeade in an effort to snag a ride back to the castle with him. As you ordered, I wanted to position myself in his office to review his personal files...."

"I know all this. What did you learn?"

"He bought two kinds of pornography in plain brown paper, his robe pocket smells of cheese..."

"Two kinds?"

"Of porn. Yes."

"Details, Wormtail."

“Yes, Master. One magazine featured old ladies wearing cat costumes and three magazines showed young men wearing rather transparent robes...”

Voldemort snorted. “Oh yes. Dumbledore out buying for himself and his master, the crafty old McGonagall. We all know where the real power is at Hogwarts, don’t we?”

Wormtail had never had an idea about McGonagall. “He also grumbled that Harry Potter had slipped out of his safe house and he had all his people attempting to track him down...”

“Potter!”

“Yes, Master. Harry Potter.”

“Potter. Potter. Potter.” Voldemort pointed to the blond witch that Bellatrix was choking into unconsciousness. “You, bring me the newest Witch Weekly magazine. It had quite a profile on Potter. We need to know more about him. Where would he go? How? Who are his friends? What type of shampoo does he use? How large are his...bludgers...err, snitches...you know, for Quidditch...”

Wormtail was glad the spotlight was off him, but he refused to go out shopping for magazines about Potter, or pornography with Potter look-alikes, or Potter voodoo dolls from Knockturn Alley, or any of the kinky Potter-related items sold by the hags in the Hog’s Head (e.g., the Potter Popper).

He slunk out of the room and decided he might just have to find a new family to live with. That crazy Weasley girl had been obsessed with Potter for a decade; now he was in another ‘family’ equally obsessed with Potter. He was tired of the boy who just reminded him of his betrayed, murdered former friend.

Then again, Peter Pettigrew was a coward. So he’d probably just stick around and crab walk on demand. Or dance the limbo. Or the Macarena.

“Wormtail, get me a Lifesize Harry Potter Anatomically Proportional Dueling Doll...and a Quidditch Masters’ Series Harry Potter Flier...and –”

Peter stopped listening. He needed to find a new place to hang out.

The Dark Lord was a Potter fangirl...with a penchant for torture curses.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dear Hagrid,

I hope you are well. I wanted to thank you for your lessons about magical creatures. They have been very handy in the last few weeks since I’ve been out in the world.

I wonder if you could identify the type of bird I’ve sent your letter with. Hedwig complained bitterly about the long trips between Britain and where we’re staying. So I caught this bird. It seems eager enough to fly off with this letter, so I hope you’ll receive it.

He is the largest bird I have ever come across, seven meters from wing tip to wing tip...so it was very lucky that it enjoyed swooping down to steal my goats. I was able to trap it after that – and then discovered it much preferred nundu regurgitation piles to live goats. He was glad to hang around after discovering an abundant source of food here.

Could you try feeding it? Let me know if there is anything in particular it likes. Try not to anger it. Lightning seems to strike if it gets grumpy.

I have sent along a gift of sorts. In my spare time (in between feeding all my new pets and harvesting potions ingredients to sell), I am starting to craft wands. The one I’ve sent you is 16 inches made from umbrella tree wood and a pinfeather from this bird. I thought about using a tail feather, but I don’t think a thirty-seven inch wand is very practical, is it?

Tell me how it works for you. I gave it a wave once I completed it and the sparks knocked a tree over. Should be more generally useful than your crossbow.

Oh, no... Damn, the nundu got out of its enclosure to attack the dragons...again

Hope you are well,

Harry

P.S. I remember how much you liked Norbert the Norwegian Ridgeback. I wonder if you were familiar with any African species of dragons. The book I have didn't mention any. When I was out searching for potions ingredients I came across five massive dragons that don't match anything I've ever seen before. The biggest one is thirty meters long. It is completely black except for the teeth and nails, which are all metallic silver. Any ideas?

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Tonks tripped again over her own feet. Moody grunted at her in disgust. Shacklebolt sighed in annoyance.

They'd searched nearly every part of London in the last few days. The grocery stores and bars (especially when Tonks complained she was hungry or thirsty), the movie theatres and gay dance clubs (as Shacklebolt liked movies with Tom Cruise or young men who looked like the young Tom Cruise), the back alleys (as that would be where Moody would hide, if he ever needed to)...

Harry Potter wasn't here. He wasn't in the Tube (Tonks had insisted on checking every station as she liked to ride the train); he wasn't inside Westminster Abbey (Shacklebolt was a closet Anglican); he wasn't dead in the Thames (Alastor had transfigured a glass bottomed boat to check, as Tonks and Shacklebolt were forced to row).

"What are we going to tell Albus," Shacklebolt asked.

“Well, let’s think for a moment. We’ve been looking for how long?” Moody asked.

“A week, off and on.”

“And if we can’t find him then the Death Eaters can’t either, right,” Moody said.

Shacklebolt nodded.

“So what do we do?” Tonks said.

“We get Albus to call this all off. We’d be better off staking out Lucius Malfoy, right,” Moody said.

“I agree,” Shacklebolt said. “But Albus is a might...preoccupied with the Potter boy.”

“Then we take it to the boss,” Tonks chipped in. “McGonagall will scold him into compliance.”

Moody grumbled a bit...and then Shacklebolt and Tonks realized it was laughter of a sort.

“She rules poor Albus with an iron...paw. But she has a better head on her shoulders than Albus does. Tonks, you volunteering?”

The metamorphmagus shook her head. “Nope, last time I visited her she asked me to turn into an old woman...and then she handed me a cat costume. Rather disturbing.”

Moody nodded. “I’m about as ugly as they come and she’s tried to get me into a cat costume. Shacklebolt, you’re not old enough and you’re not a metamorphmagus. Go to Hogwarts with the message...and take a Lifesize Potter Doll along as a peace offering to Albus, right?”

The black Auror frowned but eventually nodded his head.

“How did Albus talk me into joining this bloody Order? Tracking down school boys, buying him his porn or life-sized boy dolls, sitting down

in the Department of Mysteries protecting some retarded prophecy. Oh boy....”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dear Remus,

I finally arrived. It took me a while, via letter, to convince Harry to tell me where he was. Africa...of all the places in the world, Africa.

The location is just as he described it, but more terrifying. The fence is really made up of posts with old human skulls on them. The shack looks worse than the Shrieking Shack from the outside, but it's quite comfortable inside. Harry has become quite skilled with cooling charms.

He really does have a nundu, a shack filled with deadly spiders, about forty different snakes slithering freely around the grounds, a massive bird that could eat me in one bite, a pack of grims, a nest of dragons, and I don't know what else. There's a whole patch of overgrown Devil's Snare...and then there's all sorts of creatures that hang around in the river once they figured out that Harry would feed them.

He has become, surprisingly, quite a successful businessman. Do you know how much a milliliter of spider venom sells for? Forty galleons. It's a critical ingredient in the, ahem, male stamina potion. Harry dug a basement under his house and put in a vault. It's pretty full already.

He's forcing me to head up the owl order portion of the business. I have to write a catalog and then send it out. Any ideas how to do such a thing?

Anyway, this part of Africa is truly beautiful. Harry took me over to his favorite waterfall the other day. Just his luck, he discovered an abandoned augurey chick (who knew they were in Africa, too). It feels like a profitable animal rescue center. Thank Merlin Harry already has some real grim, otherwise he might put poor Padfoot in a cage as well.



Kid's become pretty good with magic. I guess you'd have to in such a remote place. Nearest village is about a two hour walk. Kid's also quite good in the kitchen. I never would have imagined that goat, sweet potatoes, and peanuts would be as good as it was.

Perhaps Harry will invite you to visit. Would you come? Dumbledore was trying to get me to open up 12 Grimmauld...but I don't see why I should bother. The place is a nightmare.

If you do come, bring some chocolate. Can't seem to find any out here. Oh, and it would be plenty safe for Buckbeak here, too. Just as long as he stays away from the nundu and the dragons.

Come on, it'll be fun.

Seriously Sirius

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Severus Snape was having a good day. He hadn't been called to Voldemort or Dumbledore, his pair of deluded masters. He had finished a new batch of hair preservative which had the possibility of ensuring he didn't look so greasy all the time. (It had a tendency to drip into potions. The last blood replenisher he'd brewed had been ruined five minutes before it was finished.)

He also had an appointment in Petticoat Alley later tonight with one of the Polyjuiced numbers on offer at one of the better brothels.

Polyjuice before for both client and 'service provider'; a Memory Charm after for the whore: all part of the price. It didn't matter who saw his Dark Mark under those circumstances.

Then an owl flew into the room and Severus felt his day had gotten even better.

The new potions supply house he'd heard about finally put out a catalog. Severus ripped the sheets of paper from the owl and began to read and drool.

“How do they have nundu breath? And for that price? Finally, all the previously unavailable potions I can make. And grim hair? There’s an Invisibility Potion that not even Moody can see through. And lethifold parts, skin, and blood. There’s a dozen things I can make from that....”

Severus began to create elaborate plans in his mind. Potions to make. Potions worth enough that he could leave both Hogwarts and the Death Eaters behind. Severus could enjoy life in South America, like all those escaped muggle Nazis from years before.

He’d set up a bed and breakfast. And poison all the rich widows who came...after he made them fall in love with him...and rewrite their wills in Severus’ favor. Oh, yes. A life of wealth and passion...and no more Merlin forsaken Cruciatus Curses.

He found the order form and began filling it out. Severus had about a thousand galleons in his Gringotts vault that he could pour into a business venture.

So...how best to spend a thousand galleons?

Ten quart bottles of nundu breath: 85 galleons

Forty kilograms of nundu manure: 120 galleons

Four milliliters of African scorpion spider venom: 160 galleons

One kilogram of grim hair: 100 galleons

Fifty grams of lethifold skin: 80 galleons

Sixty milliliters of lethifold blood: 180 galleons

Eight thunderbird pin feathers: 240 galleons

All the things he could do. And it was just under 1000 galleons...until Severus saw the next few lines on the order form fill themselves in.

Death Eater Surcharge: 1000 galleons

Greasy Git Tax: 6000 galleons

Delivery Fee (via Blind Bat): 12000 galleons

Decontamination Fee / Order Processing Fee: 1000 galleons

Severus ripped up the paper and began to scream. All his plans went up in flames. No South American refuge. No killing rich widows. No inheriting estate after estate. No freedom from the Cruciatus...or dunderheaded students...or crazy loons offering him lemon drops.

“No. No!”

He began to rock in his chair...and a bit of drool escaped from his mouth.

He would get even. If it was the last thing he ever did, Severus Snape would get even...with these monsters who destroyed his dreams.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dear Gred and Forge,

I hope you are well – or at least you are only wounded in the pursuit of developing a new prank. I’ve enclosed shrunken and lightened packages of nundu and dragon dung. Perhaps you could use these raw materials to improve the standard dungbomb?

If you haven’t yet heard, I’ve gone into business. I now collect and sell potions ingredients. Perhaps I might be able to help you out with some of the more rare things you might need.

I’ve got a nice house now...and quite a collection of ‘pets,’ more than enough to make Hagrid envious. I’ll be writing to Ron and everyone else soon, but I don’t expect to return to Hogwarts in the fall.

It’s far more fun in the jungle.

I've just started up a bit of a village near to my house. Remus Lupin showed up unexpectedly and I wanted to make sure he had something to do. So we have a combination public library and pub...our first building. Whoever shows up next is going to have to open and run a church of some denomination. Then we'll need an inn or something. I guess I'd eventually have to name the place, as well.

Have fun and prank mercilessly,

Harry

P.S. Could you forward a catalog from Flourish and Blott's with the thunderbird that delivered this letter? Remus demands more books for his library, especially after the nundu escaped its enclosure again, ate three goats, and then used the library's divination texts as a pulpy dessert.

P.P.S. Do you have owl addresses for Bill and Charlie? Remus is looking into how to ward our little slice of the jungle. I need to ask some dragon questions to someone knowledgeable, like Charlie.

P.P.P.S. Say hi to Ron for me.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

"Wormtail, perhaps you might enlighten me about your recent...activities," Voldemort hissed before a full gathering of his Death Eaters.

"Master, I was carrying out your instructions...."

"Then why were you cowering in your rat form underneath the home of Amelia Bones. It appears that you had abandoned me again."

"No, Master, I was attempting to get into Susan Bones' room. She has the various lifesize Harry Potter dolls you required...."

"Interesting. But I think you lie. Crucio! Malfoy, you will lead a raid on the Bones residence to recover the necessary...er, research materials. Be low key as we are still trying to keep to the shadows...."

Voldemort was getting into the sound of his own lecture when the doors slammed open and Severus Snape stalked inside.

Voldemort frowned at the interruption. "Severus, why do you storm in here?"

"Master, I have found a new enemy of your great regime. This blasphemous potion ingredient house dares levy a tax against your Death Eaters."

Voldemort frowned in confusion.

"They sent me this delightful catalog with the rarest ingredients I've ever seen. Nundu's breath; lethifold blood; thunderbird feathers. The potions I could make for the cause would be extraordinary."

"Yes, I see, Severus. I see. What do you propose?"

"We attack, my Lord."

"Do you know where they are located?"

"No, my Lord. We attack through the owl post...."

"So you're volunteering to be shrunk and sent off by owl?"

Severus grinned a horrible smile. "I think, my Lord, the better attackers would be that five foot basilisk you hatched...and that young cockatrice that killed Avery...and the manticore and the chimera that those people you tried to recruit in Sussex were attempting to crossbreed. No one could withstand the unexpected attack of four killers like those...and then my Lord would no longer have the dangerous task of caring for them."

Voldemort seemed interested. He had lost three of his faithful followers to those beasts currently kept in the sub-sub-basements.

"Excellent, Severus. Laugh with me as we work out the details of our elaborate plot."

“Yes, my Lord. But what’s a laugh?”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

## Harry Potter and the Kurtz Estate, Chapter 2

A/N: A kind reviewer asked for a plot. Blame him or her for this continuing...travesty. The obvious plot starts in this chapter and should finish up in four or five more. Much thieving goodness from other fanfic writers and also old movies and shows. Kudos to anyone who can spot them all.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dear Flourish and Blotts Manager,

I have enclosed 125 galleons. I would like your staff to send along 25 galleons worth of whatever divination texts you have in stock. Our resident nundu seems to have literally consumed all our library's previous offerings in this discipline.

In addition, I would like 25 galleons of potions texts, 25 galleons of magical creature texts, the books entitled Old Priest and Young Priest: Wacky Exorcism Rituals for Fun and Profit, and The Fawly Towers Guide to Hotel Mis-Management. Please spend the remaining galleons on any texts on hospitality management and religion (especially any that venerate eels, mongeese, or pumpkin pastries) you might happen to have in stock. (Unfortunately, Reverend Fred and Innkeeper George couldn't be any more specific about the books they wanted.)

I wonder if your staff might recommend any magical correspondence school. We have several students who wish to finish off their schooling by owl post. Any help would be appreciated.

The thunderbird delivering this letter should be plenty large enough to bring back all the books we've requested. If not, please feel free to deduct your standard owl post delivery charges for any owls you sent out to us.

Best regards,

Remus Lupin

Resident Librarian and Pubmaster,

Hamlet of Nundu-Ate-My-Books, The Congo

P.S. Do you have any cookbooks on how to prepare and serve goat? Please send along any you might have. Also anything on preparing crocodile, perhaps goat-stuffed crocodile. Thanks.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Albus had had a bad month. First, the whole Tournament thing...and that poor boy dying. (Then having to comfort the dead boy's parents, so much crying on his robes.) Then the whole Voldemort thing, you know, his rebirth. Then it was Minerva keeping him in his discipline harness for thirty hours straight. Then the articles about him in the Prophet, the Minister acting like even more of a hippogryph's behind, and the threat of placing his foul henchtoad at Hogwarts.

Finally, worst of all, he'd run out of the pinnacle of alchemical science. He was out of lemon sherbets, the special kind, the magical kind.

Few knew it, but the only thing more difficult to create than a Philosopher's Stone was a perfectly balanced lemon sherbet. The appropriate amounts of sweet and sour; of lightness and darkness; of gravel and peat moss; the razor's edge balance of calming potion and memory obfuscation elixir. The right amounts of GHB and ketamine plus the appropriate amount of peyote and LSD. Then, the keystone: the milligram of Ritalin in every candy.

It took Albus more than...err, five minutes to brew the concoction up...but it was a tense five minutes. Any distraction, any distraction at all would result in nothing dangerous happening. However, if he added too much candied lemon peel to the mixture, then his lips might pucker a bit, sometimes.

As Albus knew, it was the hardest thing to make in all of alchemy. Such a dangerous creation couldn't be taught to children – even if he did offer one to everyone who entered his office – which was why he'd cut out half the courses at Hogwarts once he'd become headmaster.



Who wanted to learn alchemy? Or who wanted to attend a course solely on the transmutation of sewage into gold? Or that class on fooling Gringotts goblins to increase the interest they paid – who needed that? Or the one on defeating Dark Lords with logic and lime jello? Or the course on dragon wrangling?

Or the one on politics and keeping the Ministry of Magic honest – useless. There was also that course, quite antiquated, on teaching wizards how not to get witches pregnant. Didn't all parents discuss such things, awkwardly and haltingly, at home, once, for perhaps seven and a quarter minutes? Or the one on how to ensure a wizard never became a fat, firewhiskey drinking slob who was in dire need of divorce (which was illegal in the wizarding world)? Bah, much better to teach five years of astronomy and goblin rebellions, err, History of Magic.

Albus popped his last lemon sherbet into his mouth...and reeled for a moment. It lost a good deal of its potency it seemed; plenty of LSD in effect, but almost no memory clearing elements remaining. He didn't normally think about the past this much. Best not to dwell on dreams, especially when there was peyote and LSD available.

Maybe he'd need more of the memory obscuration elixir in the next batch?

Albus blinked a few times and then sat down. He'd need to order some supplies immediately if he were going to get some new lemon sherbets in a timely fashion.

He dug into one of the piles on his side table. His potions supplier catalogs. Most alchemy was done with potions ingredients...just in a special way confusingly described and annotated with runes and rituals that made no difference whatsoever to the final product.

Albus quickly marked down the long list of muggle pharmaceuticals he needed (he was the leading purchaser of psychotropics in wizarding Britain), then turned to a new catalog for potions supplies.

The selection was excellent and the prices were quite reasonable. What could he use as filler for his magical lemon sherbets?

One kilograms of grim dander: 8 sickles

Two kilograms of augurey regurgitation: 1 galleon 6 sickles

One kilogram of toad spawn: 3 sickles

Four kilograms of fermented Devil's Snare trimmings: 4 sickles

Twenty kilograms of crushed Congolese Black dragon egg shells: 3 galleons 4 sickles

Albus was quite pleased with the good deals he received when a few more lines on his order form filled themselves in.

Perverted Headmaster Tax: 500 galleons

Kidnapper of Babies Penalty: 750 galleons

Excess Dementia Tax: 1250 galleons

Outlived Your Usefulness Fee: 5000 galleons

Lets People Rot in Prison Surcharge: 100000 galleons

The Headmaster was confused for a good long while. He certainly didn't have 105,000 galleons to spend on something worth about 6 or 7 galleons. Hmm, a faulty order form. He might have to write and let the company know that their order form was so...buggy.

He decided to order from someone else...when the door to his office slammed open and the real Headmaster...err, Deputy Headmistress strolled in with an angry expression on her face.

"Albus, you've been a bad boy. Bad!"

"No, I haven't. I've been a good Headmaster. But I'm out of lemon sherbets...."

"You have been bad," McGonagall said. "This letter in my hand proves it. You've been a very bad Headmaster. Not only did you not bring me any new...magazines today, but you've lost us our most prominent student. Who will attend if Harry Potter doesn't? Who will hold together the shaky plot this school year? Who will be the victim of the Ministry's lead torturer...or the target of petty, yet juvenile attacks by your pet Death Eater? Hmm? Without Harry, we don't have a plot! Our show...err, book...err, school will be cancelled."

"I didn't do that."

"You did. I'm telling you, Albus. Get. Harry. Back. And I don't want you trying to pass off one of your lifesize dolls as Harry. They don't eat, talk, suffer...they don't do anything right. In fact, your punishment (in addition to being restrained) will be to give up all your lifesize, anatomically proportionate Harry Potter dolls. Where do you keep them?"

Albus mumbled something.

"What? Speak clearly...or I'll double your punishment. And I'll confiscate your magazines of young men in see-through robes."

"All right," Albus said. "My doll collection is in Lecture Hall 7."

"You need an entire lecture hall? Where do you keep your pornography then? Lecture Halls 1 through 6?"

Albus was suspiciously silent.

"Fine. All confiscated by order of the Deputy Headmistress."

"But I'm the Headmaster?"

"Do you want to be in your harness for twelve hours, Albus?"

"Fine."

“Excellent. Things work much better when you agree with me. We should have had this out years and years ago, long before you placed Potter with those horrible muggles. Come to think of it, Albus, you’ve never been punished for that.”

“No, Mistress....”

“You have not earned that right, worm. You will call me Deputy Headmistress, worm.”

“Yes, Deputy Headmistress.”

“So, you get your toys and magazines confiscated and a number of hours in your harness. But what to do for ignoring my counsel all those years ago....”

“A beating, Deputy Headmistress?”

“Not painful enough, worm. Perhaps hours mucking out stables? Cleaning the house elf quarters, no they’d riot if someone else cleaned them. Oh, I’ve surprised myself. You will have private dinners with Professor Trelawney, the old fraud, every night until classes resume. She will be denied her sherry and you won’t be touching another lemon sherbet until September 1....”

“No! No, Deputy Headmistress. Anything but that. I’ll claw my own eyes out. I’ll pluck out inner ear bones....”

“Another thing to punish you for. You didn’t listen to me about Potter’s placement and you certainly didn’t listen to me about abolishing Divination. Instead, you got rid of the politics and finance courses, and that dealing with Dark Lords course, and the ‘health’ course which scared the bejesus out of amorous wizards...you know, things which were actually useful. Yes, I think this is the perfect punishment...to begin with.”

“You are more than cruel, Deputy Headmistress.” Albus sounded defeated.

“And I think you will be restricted to speaking about divination techniques while you dine.”

“No! Nooooo.”

“Tarot cards; palmistry; séances, oh yes.”

“No. Deputy Headmistress, please be kind to your old mentor.”

“Perhaps you’ll learn, worm. Now find me someone old enough to wear a catsuit. My non-magical poster of Michelle Pfeiffer isn’t as exciting as it once was.”

“Nooooo. I’ll take a week in the discipline harness, Deputy Headmistress. Anything but Trelawney, She-Who-Cannot-Divine.”

“You will, worm. I can add to your punishment, you know. Mr. Filch needs to eat lunch just as much as Trelawney needs to eat dinner. I understand he’s hopping mad over a new variety of dungbomb that’s hit the market. Next to impossible to clean up...and whoever breathes in the odors comes down with an illness or four. Dragon Pox, Spattergoit, a mysterious rash on one’s upper thighs, a second head....”

“Noooooooo. Not Filch, Deputy Headmistress.”

“Get me my bullwhip, worm. We have plans to make. And get Nymphadora Tonks to return my firecalls. I think she would look fetching as a seventy year old in a cat woman suit.”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The Deputy Headmistress looked down at the letter in her hand again. It displeased her greatly. She’d have to send out her Order again to find Mr. Potter.

And she made a note to punish Albus further. Perhaps she’d take away his animated Phoenix doll named Fawkes. It was bad enough that the old madman made everyone believe it was real; now he was

talking with the blasted thing while he was in his harness. She'd have to take the doll away...and add a ball gag.

Potter's letter made her sad, angry, and resolute all at the same time:

Dear Professor McGonagall,

I am withdrawing from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry as I have started a business and intend to see it through.

I plan to continue my magical education via self-study, tutors, or owl correspondence courses. Do you have any recommendations in this line?

Thank you for your tuition over the years.

Best regards,

Harry Potter

P.S. Could you ask the kitchen elves if they have any recipes for goat? My employees are getting fed up (no pun intended) with the limited repertoire I have for caprine cooking. Thank you for asking them.

Cooking goat? Self study with his poor academic record? Starting a business at age fourteen? Something was very wrong here. And the Deputy Headmistress intended to find out what it was.

And she'd have to add more punishment to Albus. He always insisted that Gryffindors and Slytherins shared Potions class together. That was worth a paddling – or twenty.

Oh, yes, the Deputy Headmistress had plans.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dear Hermione,

I hope you are well. I remember you were supposed to be vacationing in Europe. Did you visit Viktor Krum? Some of the Gryffindor girls mentioned that he lived in a castle. Was it nice?

I was just elected mayor of NoName Town. Our reverend insisted he would only vote for me if I agreed that our town would never have a permanent name. So I am required to think up a new name every time I write a letter. Crazy townsfolk.

I have also started up a potions supply business. I will make sure I get our owl order manager to put your name on the catalog list. So far it's been fun. The nundu is rather high maintenance, but our resident dragons haven't caused many problems.

We also just got a very generous donation of creatures. Some kind soul sent me a young basilisk, a well-tempered cockatrice, and a rather amorous pair of manticore and chimera. Apparently no other poitions supply company bothers with these four beasts...but Hagrid might actually be right. They're relatively harmless. (The thousands of African scorpion spiders we have in our spider hut have caused many more problems and none of them are bigger than ten centimeters in length.)

The town is small so far, but we're growing. We have a pub, a church, an inn, and one major business. The house I bought is a fixer upper, but I can use magic freely out here. (No stupid Ministry rules.) It's become a fairly nice place to live. Perhaps you can come and visit next summer with your parents. I can show you my favorite water fall.

If you come, will you bring some tinned beef or fish or anything other than goat? Thanks in advance.

Oh, you'll never believe what we discovered a few days ago. About twenty miles from our little hamlet, I found a group of diricawl – known to muggles as the extinct dodo bird – and they seem to be in good health. Apparently their shed feathers are quite useful in beauty potions and a modified swelling solution that hasn't been used much in a hundred years.

Anyway, enjoy your OWL year at Hogwarts. I'm sure you've already started revising. Take some time to enjoy life, too.

All my best,

Harry

Mayor of Goat-Central-Jungle, The Congo

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dear Ron,

How have you been? I got word that the Cannons won their first game in three seasons. I hope you were excited for them.

Too bad the other team came down with bubonic plague shortly before the match. It was a shame that one of the Beaters for the Falcons died in the air and landed on two of their Chasers and their Seeker. Still, it was a close match, 220-210.

I wrote to McGonagall to let her know I wasn't coming back to Hogwarts this year. I stumbled into a job that's fun and dangerous (on par with what your brother Charlie is doing). No matter what, I expect you to try out for the Quidditch team. You'll make a great Keeper.

The twins wrote and told me that they pranked you a few times. I hope you got them back. The simplest thing I could recommend would be to cut off some finger nails from a few garden gnomes and put them in their pumpkin juice. Instant chaos the next time you see them. (Don't tell them I said that.)

I should tell you that we have a lot of spiders here (the venom is pretty useful for potions)...so I'll understand if you're leery of visiting later this summer. Still, I'll send a letter to your mum to invite everyone down for a few days.

Maybe you can come visit. If not, have a great year at Hogwarts.

Bye!



Harry

P.S. I've been trying to get in touch your brother Charlie. We just got a bicorn and a quintaped. I know he works with dragons, but I wonder if he has any experience with other creatures.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Perenelle Flamel, otherwise known as Hetty the Batty Realtor, sat down with her potions catalogs. She and her husband, Nicholas, were down to only seven Philosopher's Stones, all of them pretty much used up...so it was time to synthesize another one.

The damned things were horrendously expensive to make...everyone thought that they were useful in transforming lead into gold, but that was a lie (one of Nick's better ideas to puff up his reputation; some weak-minded fools got excited about immortality, but everyone wanted more gold). The Stone's only value was in extending life. Seriously, if she had an infinite amount of gold would she bother to sell real estate to nimrods?

She began flipping through catalogs. She needed a whole dragon heart, but none of the owl order catalogs offered them. (They were illegal to sell, except to a registered wand maker.) She'd probably have to approach a few people in Knockturn Alley.

She needed four leprechaun brains as well. No go in the catalogs. Perhaps she'd have to make a journey to Ireland.

However, she did find phoenix ash in one catalog. And trice-scorched yew wood.

But the find of the century was a dismal set of sheets that offered lethifold skin, grim hair, manticores venom, and basilisk fang. The catalog offered incredible prices. She ordered two thousand galleons worth of components from just that catalog. She was ready to sign the bottom of the order form when she noticed a few auto-filled lines at the bottom of the form.

Evil Realtor Surcharge: 5000 galleons

Secret Identity Tax – Flamel: 15000 galleons

Ridiculous Phony Surname Fee: 1000 galleons

Failed Evil Plotting Penalty: 100000 galleons

She crumpled the form up and screamed. Then she decided to get even.

A quick perusal of the form revealed the potions company was in Up-Your-Goat's-Nostril, The Congo.

Congo. Congo. That blasted Kurtz Estate.

That meant...that meant that Potter hadn't died.

He'd invented this insulting order form to taunt her failure. The little bastard, little premature ejaculating bastard, the little whimpers-when-tortured-with-hot-coals bastard....

Oh no. Perenelle Flamel, er, Hetty Bogrash never failed.

She got even.

The old batty woman grabbed her cloak and went to fetch her husband. She walked to the employee entrance of Gringott's.

"Excuse me, master goblin, but have you seen my husband Trellis Bogrash?"

"I know no such person," the short creature said, before breaking out into a feral, toothy grin.

"Well, do you know where," here her voice became much quieter, "Cockrot is?"

"Oh, Cockrot. Yes, I believe Cockrot is having lunch at the Stamped Galleon." It didn't help that the little goblin was almost yelling out his

answer...and very nearly laughing. "It's a pub mostly frequented by goblins...and dim-witted humans. They serve the best firecrab larvae there. Just behind Gringotts and up four blocks. Can't miss it; it's in the darkest alley. Cockrot said he was picking up the tab for everyone there. Great guy, Cockrot, even if he is broken down and fairly useless."

"Err, thanks."

She hated goblins now more than ever, but they would serve their purpose. The foul little creatures would literally sell their mother's decayed bones to make a sickle...so when she 'inadvertently' offered them the information find of the century, there would be a stampede to sell it off to everyone.

An hour and a half later, Hetty finally stumbled into the darkest alley. Who knew that the London streets around Diagon had eight or twelve dark alleys per block? Magic was great, but sometimes witches and wizards were just stupid. Hiding extra dark alleys didn't seem smart at all.

Hetty walked into the literal hole in the wall (it looked like a troll had just clubbed down a section of wall) and saw her husband, drunk and slurping down fire crab larvae by the bucket.

She greeted him with a firm handshake, rather than the traditional kiss, as he had wriggling guts on his lips. Then she was pushed into a seat and handed a drink that smelled like the fermented sweat from a dozen, molding Quidditch robes.

"Hetty, Hetty. What're ya doin' here," Trellis, or Nick, or her husband slurred out.

"I just got a letter from that sweet boy Harry Potter. He's settled into his new place in the Congo very nicely. I understand he took my advice and started up a potions supply business."

"Isn't that sweet? Want some larvae?"

Hetty noticed with no mean satisfaction that the room began to empty out rapidly. Even the bartender disappeared through a back door. Only Perenelle, Nick, and a couple goblins too drunk on fermented sweat remained.

Life was good.

"I'm not going to drink that. And I'm not going to.... No, Trellis." Her drunk husband didn't seem to recognize his new name. "You are Trellis....so stop shoving those wriggling creatures near my mouth. There is no way, absolutely no way. Ack! Why did you do that." A spicy flavor filled her mouth.

"That isn't half bad, but you're still sleeping on the iron-spike bed tonight. Alone."

"Damn, not half drunk 'nough for that. Want some dis, Hetty?"

The smell sent shivers down her back. It could be the stuff in the glass or the fact that her husband's breath smelled exactly the same way.

She felt more than a little nauseous. "No, thanks. I'm going to head back to work. Isn't it time you went back to Gringotts?"

"Don't want to. Dragon tried to eat my arm."

"I'm sure it wasn't that bad."

"The goblin healer had to beat the dragon up to get my arm out of its mouth. Then it took twenty minutes to reattach it. That's why I'm soooo dru...dru...er, wasted...."

"I see. Maybe it's time to think of a safer line of work."

"Pimp?"

"No, Nic...er, Trellis. You'd spend too much time sampling the wares."

“Bartender?”

“Lush much?”

“Famous artist?”

“Maybe, but you’d have to die before your paintings would be worth anything.”

“Done it before. We could do it again.”

“Alright, it’s a definite maybe.”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dear Mr. Lovegood,

Thank you for your inquiry. We have searched our ranch and do not, at present, have any samples of your requested creatures. Perhaps if we had a firmer description beyond just the name we might be able to assist you better.

As you may be aware, new creatures are discovered all the time. Why the dragon breed Congolese Black was discovered very close to our ranch. In addition, creatures thought lost, such as Golden Snidgets and diricawls, have been found in the jungle, too. Do not despair.

As for your request for your daughter to intern with us, we would be glad to host Ms. Lovegood here. We have enclosed the medical release form, the accidental creature digestion release form, the vicious poisoning release form, the unexpected mauling release form, the agonized drowning release form, the malicious pranking release form, and the meal preference selection form. (If your daughter is allergic to goat, or does not like the taste, we might recommend her not coming for an internship.) Any questions may be answered by our solicitor, Lord Black, at Padfoot, Grim, and Bark.

(One quick note: our canteen, at present, has one hundred four recipes for goat...including goat soufflé, goat ragout, goat goulash,

thrice-dragon-roasted goat spleen, peanut and goat, yam and goat, peanut, yam, and goat, goat roasted in Devil's Snare, goat roasted in clay, goat roasted in mud, goat roasted under rocks, and so on.)

Please contact us for any further questions. We will expect your daughter on August 1.

Best regards,

The Management

Grim and Heckle Potions Purveyors

Send-Chicken-We're-Tired-of-Goat-Already, The Congo

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

"Mr Lord, we have discovered where Potter is," the simpering Death Eater proclaimed.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

"My Lord, we have discovered where Potter is," the simpering Dedalus Diggle said to a drugged out Albus Dumbledore (still strung up in his harness). After getting no response, he left the room in confusion and went to find Minerva.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

"My Lord, we have discovered where Potter is," the simpering Dolores Umbridge whispered lustily to her Fudge, who was gorging himself on bon-bons made from house elves (not by house elves).

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

"My Lord...err, my Editor, we have discovered where Potter is," said the unctuous Rita Skeeter to her personality-less boss.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

“Holy Shit, Potter’s in Africa,” said the Quidditch team publicity manager. “We need to take advantage of this bleeding edge trend. Famous, sexy celebrities visit Africa. They adopt orphans; they visit villages and dig wells and ditches. They stage concerts and raise money and get tons of publicity.

“We must visit Africa. For a charity game. For orphans and water wells and hunger relief and making me more famous than Bono and Bill Gates. There must be no humanitarian fundraising gap. We will not fail. We will not let Potter out Africa us, out humanitarian us, or out-catch us on the pitch. Boys, suit up, we’re going to the jungle!”

A rather unenthusiastic bunch of Quidditch players shrugged until the team’s owner seemed to start nodding his head. P.R. was P.R., even if it meant malaria and diarrhea for days.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

“My Lord,” the simpering fan girl said to an eight foot tall poster of Harry’s face, “we have found you. We are coming.”

The hundreds of girls (and the Creevey brothers) rose up and began to prepare. This was the best Harry Potter Fan Club meeting in some time: road trip. It was almost as good as the time Colin brought in omniocular footage of Harry soaping up in the shower.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dear Mr. William Weasley,

Thank you for your response to our earlier letter. I will pass along your breathless comments about our thunderbird to the creature himself. But I will dole them out over time, as I don’t want Barney to get a big head.

As for the schedule you propose, it is acceptable. We would greatly prefer to have our facility warded earlier than October, but we understand how ‘in demand’ a team of warders and cursebreakers can be.

(Do not worry about us in the meantime. I am led to believe by the locals that we have already plugged up most of the security holes. The hundred kilometer network of dangerous, secret, semi-collapsed caverns was quite useful for storing...err, certain animal products. The dank helps it ferment. And we have worked out a way to avoid an attack from the river...and from the air. Dragons are useful for more than eating goats, after all.)

We look forward to hosting you and your team in the future. Perhaps you might also evaluate the ancient burial mounds we've discovered. Also, we have a fair number of cursed objects that locals have traded to us for our wares; we would want someone to examine them as well. (There's one rather mouthy talking, shrunken head that we would like to get rid of.) Plenty to keep you busy.

Hope you are well,

Jina Lako

Manager, Grim and Heckle Potions Purveyors

Mayor, Shit-Don't-Stink-When-It's-Buried, The Congo

P.S. I thought it was an offense against Gringotts to reveal your goblin name. You should be more careful not to recycle love notes from French witches. We will pretend not to have made note of the name "Gingerpassionfury."

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

"What is your bidding, my Lord?"

"Attack!"

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

"What is your bidding, my Lord?"

"I'm not a man. Can't you tell?"



“What is your bidding, my Lady?”

“Call me the Deputy Headmistress, worm.”

“Yes, Deputy Headmistress. What is your bidding?”

“Kidnap,” Albus shouted in a mumbled sort of way through his ball gag.

“Belay that. Hmm. Repatriate!”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

“What is your bidding, my Lord?”

“More house elf bon-bons, Dolores.”

“Right away, my merciful Lord.”

The room fell silent except for the sound of Fudge’s slurping and crunching. Eventually he finished his plate.

“About Potter. I wonder. Dolores?”

“Yes, master.”

“Incriminate!”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

“What is your bidding, my...Editor?”

“Smear!”

“Of course,” Rita said with glee in her eyes. She dug out a freshly sharpened acid green quill, dripping with the milk of human...kindness.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

“What do you desire, our Lord?”

Strangely enough the eight foot poster of Potter’s head was eerily silent.

“I think I hear something,” Susan Bones whispered. “I do. I do. I hear it.”

“What does he say?” Ginny Weasley, the immediate past president of the club, asked.

“Impregnate!”

Hundreds of arms rose in the air, punching exultantly, and hundreds of mouths shouted “yes!”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dear Mr. Charles Weasley,

Thank you for your helpful letter of last Thursday. I am sorry to hear that you are not aware of the proper name of a mantico-re-chimera crossbreed. Chimicore? Mantera? Terrifying demi-demons?

In any event, we now appear to have an even dozen of them. They seem to prefer venom over milk and want their prey to be alive. Several have stingers instead of feet; others have stingers instead of wings. One has a stinger instead of a tongue. It’s a rather gruesome business all around. We will take it under advisement whether to just ship the whole lot to Rubeus Hagrid at Hogwarts.

I am also sorry to learn you had not ever heard of the Congolese Black dragon. They are quite a bit bigger and more irascible than even the Hungarian Horntail. As you noted in your letter, the sample of teeth and claws we sent do in fact seem to be made from real silver, rather than just being of a silver color. We have had to feed silver ingots to the younger dragons to help them through their growing pains.

At this time, we cannot ship any to your preserve, as the five we have are quite a tight bunch. (Plus they alone are the only things our nundu seems to fear.)

I will write to your colleagues who look after quintapedes and bicornes. I understand the necessity of specialization. No worries.

Our questions are somewhat moot now, anyway. The bicorn has become a good deal less irritable after it gave birth to tredecaplets (13 at a time). The quintaped lost its apparent sixth leg, which turned out to be a young female quintaped (3 to 4 months of age) strapped to its mother for feeding purposes.

I hope to take you up on your invitation to visit your dragon preserve. I would like to extend a similar offer to you and your colleagues in Romania. Just give us a few days' notice and we can lay in some extra goat for dinner.

Best regards,

Walla Walla

Manager, Grim and Heckle Potions Purveyor

Mayor, Awash-in-Babies, The Congo

P.S. Be sure not to arrive without ample notice at the Grim and Heckle Ranch. Dire things would likely happen if you portkeyed, apparated, parachuted, or boated your way into the wrong part of the compound. That being said, it's always safe to visit the bar of a strange town, even ours, except on the full moon, of course.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

A/N: I hope you can see where this plot is going. If I can stop giggling madly, I will try to write some more.

## Harry Potter and the Kurtz Estate, Chapter 3

A/N: Some have complained about the excess oddness of this tale. Let me explain: I'm trying to reverse some of the clichés that are prevalent in fanfiction, for comedic potential. (For example, Dumbledore is often a master manipulator, while McGonagall is his loyal servant...so I took pleasure in twisting it into a drug addled Dumbledore in a non-sexual but still master/slave relationship with McGonagall as the 'Deputy Headmistress.')

Most fanfictions are Harry-centric, so I've tried to modify that in the first few chapters by showing Harry's letters, but having scenes mostly with other folks. In the coming chapters, Harry will make appearances, but it won't return to being Harry-centric.

Harry won't be a doormat, or a superhero...he's just a blue collar stiff with a lot of luck, some good friends, and a collection of interesting 'pets.' And I'm not cutting out the oddness...it's what keeps me coming back to write more.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Death Eater Team Alpha liked their title, but was rather indifferent to the assignment. Why did they have to go after a boy? A shrimpy kid like Potter.... Waste of time.

Raping was a better assignment. Or pillaging. Or raiding. Or arson. Or muggle baiting. Or...anything, really.

Africa was boring. Was there even anything to pillage in Africa? Or anyone to molest? Or at least to harass? Or perhaps leer at?

No, there were trees...and a Potter whelp hiding out here somewhere. What a waste of pureblooded time.

Nothing to do, no good food. Or beer, beer was a necessity. Well, not beer exactly, as that was a muggle invention. 'Magical' beer was a necessity. Made from magical hops and water that rained down on the back of an erumpent. (Or at least that's what they told Voldemort so he would keep the crucios to himself.)

No. Central Africa had none of this. What it did have was trees, damned tall trees. Some trees had sticky sap. Other trees randomly dumped water on the ground. There was at least one with massive bugs crawling out of it. Others had roots that seemed to tangle up their ankles. They'd only walked a kilometer and more than an hour had passed.

They had no reliable maps. They had no precise clue where their 'target' was camped out.

It was a typical Voldemort, the name they gave to any screwed up mission. They pulled Voldemorts staking out the Bones mansion...just to seize some lifesize Harry Potter dolls. They pulled a Voldemort to try to find a way inside the Department of Mysteries. They pulled the biggest Voldemort of all by stepping foot in this blasted jungle.

Lucius Malfoy finally finished mourning his broken pimp cane – broken by a malicious tree commanded by Potter, obviously – when Goyle Senior demanded to eat some food.

"Did you bring any?"

"No," the dull man grunted.

"Well, do you know what plants are poisonous out here?"

"No."

"Then let's do our job and then you can eat some scraps from the Malfoy Manor. I'll tell our elves to give you the better, less rotten ones."

"Sounds good, guv."

"Must you talk like a common ruffian?"

"That's wot I am, ain't it?"

“Touche.”

Malfoy lead the group further into the jungle, this heart of darkness, and was about to take just another average step when he heard a voice.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you.”

“Who’s there?” Malfoy shouted out. The jungle seemed to swallow up whatever light his wand emitted.

“Well, I am. You are, Malfoy. Your brutes are also stinking up the place.”

“Who are you?”

“I happen to own this little stretch of land...so I guess you’re trespassing.” Lucius began to move toward the voice. “Hold on, Malfoy. You don’t want to step on that branch on the ground.”

“Who are you to tell me anything...Potter! I’ve been sent here by our glorious...”

“Half-blood master to snatch little old me? Good luck with that. I’ve had a steep learning curve out here in the jungle, much more vicious stuff out here than a pompous ferret and his roving dung balls. Be careful of that stick on the ground, I tell you, it’s got some sort of sap that draws yetis to it....”

“Yetis. No such thing,” Lucius said, stepping forward as he cast a spell toward where he thought Potter was standing. A branch, as Potter had warned, broke.

“I told you, Malfoy. Best of luck, I have rounds to finish. Perhaps I’ll swing by later to pick up any pieces.”

“Avada Kedavra.” The green light zipped off into the night, but hit nothing.

A more distant Harry sucked in breath. "I would choose spells that aren't green, Malfoy. That aphrodisiac branch you stepped on plus the green light will have the African mountain yetis panting. Some will want to mate; others, the worse ones, will want to nurture and coddle."

"What?"

Behind him Malfoy heard screaming. Then to the side. Then even Crabbe and Goyle were screaming.

Then Malfoy was up in the air. Apparently the massive tree he'd been standing in front of wasn't a tree...it was a seven meter tall, green African mountain yeti.

Malfoy began to scream as well, but there was no help. Some ethereal voice began...singing to him, and rocking him. It was utterly terrifying.

"No, not the hair. Please don't pet my hair," Malfoy whimpered.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Tonks landed badly from the portkey and then Mundungus seemed to tackle her...like it was intentional. And his dirty hands seemed to be roaming...

"Get your mits out of my robes. And stop that heavy breathing. Why Dumbledore trusts you I'll never understand."

"I provide val'ble intell...intellig...gossip."

Tonks grumbled and pulled out her wand. "I told you to get your filthy fingers out of my robes, you sick pervert."

"They are."

Tonks was angry. There was definitely wriggling on her bum. And...something else was wriggling on her left knee. And...something else around her neck.

“What are you doing?” She sent a biting hex where she imagined the vile thief’s hands were located. Dung yelped in pain, but the...wriggling increased.

“Do I have to try out the castration curse my mother taught me?”

“It ain’t me, missy. You’re pretty enough, but my witches gotta have warts in all the right places, if you know what I mean?”

Tonks didn’t...but she wasn’t about to dwell on it, either.

“I swear to Merlin, Fletcher. Get your hands...out of my knickers... NOW.”

Tonks began cursing. A severing curse...as every bloke would miss his best friend. And a withering curse...as every bloke would miss his best friend. And an exploding curse...as every bloke would miss his best friends. And...then she sent a transfiguration at Dung to turn him into an old lady, one just about right to fight into one of McGonagall’s cat suits. It was a bit shocking that Tonks knew so many ways to end – or severely stunt – the reproductive capabilities of overly amorous males.

Luckily for Dung, Tonks was as bad a shot as she was clumsy.

Finally, Fletcher found his wand and remembered how to cast a Lumos. When he did, he immediately dropped his wand and curled up into a little ball and began to sing incoherently to himself.

Tonks shrieked a bit, too, and then began to shiver. No one’s hands were caressing her bum in interesting ways or wriggling through her knickers. No...they weren’t fingers at all. They were scales. Scales connected to other scales...all connected to thick long color changing snakes!

The brief flare of light from Dung’s wand had shown Tonks maybe a thousand snakes in some kind of cave or decrepit structure.



She immediately levitated herself above the snakes and spent a few moments shaking out the snakes that had gotten into the most...peculiar places under her robes.

Dung just let the snakes crawl all over him while he rocked and whimpered. "Why did it have to be snakes? Why?" he groaned.

Tonks tried to get a feel for the room she was trapped inside. There was no light anywhere. She didn't feel any breezes, either. And it wasn't like she could search the floor for a hidden tunnel or anything, what with all the snakes down there.

Dung kept rocking...Tonks kept searching...and it all seemed like a bad dream. Until a light shown down from the ceiling.

Tonks wondered if she was hallucinating

"Well, hello there, pretty lady."

It was definitely a hallucination. Voices from the heavens didn't flirt with people who were trapped.

"Need a hand," the voice inquired. It was a surprisingly...exciting voice, dangerous and calming at the same time.

"Yes, please."

"What about your friend?"

"He's a dirty, smelly, half drunk pervert...and he's a thief...and I know he was thinking about feeling up my bum even if it was really a bunch of snakes. What do you think?"

"Alright, we'll call this snake cave a 'drunk tank' for the rest of the night."

Tonks floated herself up to the opening in the cave's ceiling. "Well, pretty lady, glad you could come. Of course, you're my prisoner now, so I'll take you to the inn and get the innkeeper to fix you up for the night."

“Prisoner?”

“Of course, you portkeyed onto private property.”

“Oh. I was just looking for Harry Potter. I’m supposed to return him back to Britain, where it’s safe.”

The man snorted.

“Nope, sorry, little miss. You’re a prisoner. Let’s find you a prison cell...unless, of course, you’d like to stay in my room tonight.”

“Huh?”

“The rules of our town state that invading forces are either prisoners-to-be-captured-and-pranked or they are potential girlfriends. Since I found you, and you appear to be of the female persuasion, I can make you my girlfriend and you can avoid prison...and our crazy reverend and his innkeeper brother.”

Tonks thought about the bizarre offer.

“What kind of cell...and what kind of pranks?”

“Oh...good question. Let’s see. I suppose we have room for you in the room next to where we keep the nundu...”

Tonks blanched at that. Nundu’s were legend...killers...requiring a hundred wizards to subdue. No thanks. It helped, of course, that her captor was cute...in a scruffy sort of way.

“And our owl order manager would probably want to test some of his partial transformation candies on you: you know, half octopus, half iguana, things like that. Our reverend delights in blowing things up...and our innkeeper, well, he’s just a dirty minded prat. We’d best you keep you away from his Ever-Grabbing Knickers.”

Ever-Grabbing Knickers? Sounded like a bunch of green Auror recruits seeing their first scantily clothed female colleague. No thank you. Not again.

“Yes. Yes, I’ll be your girlfriend,” Tonks shouted out. “Please may I be your girlfriend?” What a disturbing place she’d come to.

“Excellent. I’d be delighted, miss. I was fairly sure you might agree. I wonder, miss, if it’s too soon to tell you that everything you’ve ever heard about a werewolf’s incredible...stamina is absolutely true. It’s a curse with a few, ahem, major side benefits, if you catch my drift.”

Tonks coughed, a bit embarrassed.

“We can run in our wolf forms for hours and hours, barely breaking a sweat. As humans, we can...well, we can enjoy ourselves for hours before the pleasures end. Did you know that, miss? Perfectly fascinating, isn’t it?”

It was going to be...literally...a long night, wasn’t it? Tonks sighed.

“Am I coming on too strong, miss? My self-appointed ‘romantic advisers’ suggested I get a big club, find a girl I liked, and drag her back to my cave. Since I have no cave, I thought I’d at least chat you up a bit.”

Tonks had to laugh at that. What a weird, odd, utterly...fascinating man.

“But you seem quite a bit more lively without the club. Unless you’re into the sort of thing...”

Tonks’ nervous captor kept chattering for a good long while. She finally had to kiss him to get him to shut up. It was surprisingly nice.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Percy screamed when he felt his boss land on him. She was a short person, but very...dense. That was the politic way to say it, right?

She was breathing hard and wiggling a bit, but she had no obvious intention of getting up off Percy Weasley's body. He was revolted. He began shivering in revulsion...and then a wonderful idea popped into his head.

Percy was an excellent mimic...great for distracting the Terror Twins by shouting in his mother's voice...great for a number of things, none of which were pranks. Not even close to pranks. No sirree.

"Dolores," Percy shouted in his best Fudge impersonation. "Get me some house elf bon-bons."

"Yes, Master."

The fat witch rolled off the crushed Percy and tried to get to her feet. After the fifth attempt, she did so...and then looked around for Fudge.

"You took too long, Madam Umbridge. Fudge took a return portkey already. He went to the house elf bon-bon room by himself."

Dolores' eager face fell. Idiot.

Percy resented stupid people...and fat people...and bigger brown nosers than he was...and people with better titles and bigger offices...and people who got to access the secret house elf bon-bon factory...and people who had had willing sex with other conscious people...and people who hadn't grown up poor...and people who hadn't had to listen to twin younger brothers blowing up garden gnomes since they were five...and...well, Percy basically resented everyone. He was the epitome of a modern major bureaucrat.

He especially hated stupid people, though. It was his sole goal in life to stamp them all out. And this Dolores woman was not very bright.

"Let's see where we are. We need to arrest this Potter troublemaker and take him back to the Ministry for torture, err, interrogation," the fat witch said, in between her gulps for air.

"Yes, madam. Let me see if a Lumos spell will shed any light on the situation." Even though it was a joke, Percy didn't realize it...or

understand why Madam Umbridge, the stupid hag, was laughing at him.

But he did know why he began to scream when his wand lit up. There was some kind of snake staring directly at him...and it was flying.

Percy screamed...and then a dozen flying snakes attacked. (Or he could have screamed because the snakes attacked, no one ever knew for sure.)

In the moment the first fangs penetrated his pasty, freckled skin, Percy remembered that they were called occamy...and that they were quite deadly...and territorial...and....

Dolores wheezed for a moment in her fright, caught her breath, and then she reached for her super secret Ministry portkey and abandoned her colleague to his fate...even though she was within easy reach of him. Perhaps she wasn't as dumb as she appeared.

Nah.

Her punishment for losing her first partner in a 'simple assignment?' She had to return and finish it...and find Weatherbee's body if she could.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Rita Skeeter landed with a thud inside some kind of tank. Her hand was instantly wet and smelled of something vile, such as the chowder at the Leaky Cauldron. Could the portkey have been that far off?

"Bozo?"

Her photographer had either been knocked unconscious or refused to speak...or he had been sent somewhere else by the portkey.

Damn. Double damn.

How could she smear Potter some more if she didn't have any pictures of him looking moody or delusional or shouting at a brick wall?

She reached for her wand...only to find it was dissolving in her hand. She reached for her quill, the powerful tool that got her out of every kind of mess...and found it a dissolved mess. She felt her very clothing, acid green to match her best quill, melting off her body. She felt her perfectly coifed hair begin to melt.

She wanted to scream, but she couldn't chance getting any of this slime in her mouth. So far it hadn't done anything to her skin, but who knew what it might do a tongue or the lungs.

Rita was trapped, without help, without resource of any kind, in a giant pit of slime.

Unfortunately for her, she didn't see the humor in it.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The Quidditch teams arrived and wondered again how they were supposed to play an exhibition match in the dark, with no paying witnesses, and no media presence at all...all in the name of charity. They'd tried to argue these points, but that damn P.R. man insisted. So they cleared away a few acres of jungle and got on their brooms.

After much cursing from running into tree branches and the like, the match got underway at around midnight.

About five or six minutes after they started their glorified drill, the Keeper for the Falcons – one of several teams owned by the same treacle-brained Quidditch-mad wizard – discovered that the two teams did have an audience: about a hundred goats had entered the newly cleared pasture area below...and were munching away on all the cleared brush and saplings.

Strange goats. Eating and watching Quidditch at midnight. A bunch of party goats that should be sleeping.

Eventually the Quidditch players forgot about the goats and returned to their Quidditch game...in the dark. The game was going fairly well.... The bludgers hit players a few more times than would be normal among this caliber of player; the quaffle was dropped a few more times than usual, as well. It was a challenge, sort of a good challenge.

Up until one Seeker declared he'd caught a snitch. Then the other Seeker shouted the same thing. The Puddlemere captain shouted everyone down...to hover above the goats...so they could see what had happened.

Two snitches?

They had only released the one.

Then a Beater called out that he'd caught a snitch. It had just flown into his hand. Then a pair of Chasers shouted out, too.

The whole team got to the near-ground (a few feet above the goats...to keep the bristles of their brooms safe) and a few of them cast the Lumos charm.

It was quickly determined that no one had caught the snitch, but that several people had caught the reputedly extinct Golden Snidget. And that there were several other of those rare birdies flying close by.

"Now this is something for P.R.," the Falcon's captain said. "And no one's here. We've got two dozen living Snidgets and we're the only ones who know...."

"And we still haven't finished the match." That was the equally excited...and tired...captain for Puddlemere.

"Let's leave these beautiful birds alone and go find somewhere else to play."

Thus the fourteen hardened Quidditch players were subdued by a bunch of tiny birds and forced to relinquish their 'Quidditch pitch.' They were allowed to escape because the Quidditch players – by

clearing the forest – had done a good thing for the goats...giving the animals safer feeding grounds, further away from the blasted nundu.

So the Golden Snitches let the Quidditch players leave without pecking them or dive bombing them en masse or defecating on them or summoning their more ruthless and highly protective cousins, the Giant Fire-Breathing Talon Snitches.

Almost as rare as Crumple-Horned Snorkacks, the Talon Snitches were more brutal than a rampaging Horntail defending its clutch. Best for everyone concerned that the Talon Snitches hadn't been called in.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ginny portkeyed into the jungle as the official Harry Potter Fanclub 'advance team.' In truth, she wanted to get her Harry before any of the other fans could. She'd stake her claim and then perhaps she'd rent out her fiancée by the hour. He would be a good earner for the Weasley family, perhaps a galleon an hour?

She saw a light on ahead in the distance so she carefully made her way to what she hoped was her fiancée's house.

She would win. She would win it all. The other silly bints were watching a naked Colin – wearing a Harry Potter mask – do interpretive dances back at the lair, er, clubhouse. Ginny wasn't about to sit around watching Colin dance around a pole...she was going to get the real thing.

She stalked up to the door and quietly let herself inside...as she began to remove her clothing. She was down to her see-through bra and knickers when she heard an indignant shout. "Miss Weasley."

A red faced Professor Lupin stumbled down the stairs, followed by a pretty lady Ginny had never seen before, who was wearing about as much as Ginny was.

"Why are you here? And half naked? And smiling like a loon?"

"Professor Lupin, is Harry here?"



“Why?”

“Because.”

“Because why?”

“I want to know.”

“Are you stalking him?”

“Probably. What does stalk mean?”

“Damned lazy Weasleys. I’m getting your family a dictionary next Christmas. You have to promise to read it.”

The girl absently nodded, but her eyes were glazed over in anticipation. “Is Harry here?”

“Broken record.”

“My dad has one of those...and a plug. So, is Harry here?”

“Tonks, could you excuse us? I think I have to talk about the facts of life with young Miss Weasley here.”

“Alright, Remus. I’ll be in my room.”

“Put the shackles back on, prisoner.”

“Yes, gaoler.”

Remus smiled a very wide, very dirty smile. Then he frowned when he turned to look at the crazy little red head in front of him. “Get dressed...and then we’ll talk. NOW!”

Ginny ‘eep’ed in fear and began returning her clothes to their proper places.

“Now, why do you want to find Harry?”

“Well, I need to marry him before the other fan girls get here and ruin my nefarious plots.”

It made no sense at all, Remus knew, but he had to ask. “What?”

“We have a club...and an eight foot poster of Harry’s head. He told us that he was going to impregnate us all. I just want it to be all legal like...and to be first, of course.”

“Miss Weasley, have you ever been gotten ahold of any psychotropic drugs?”

“Sure, Fred and George have lots.”

“I see. So, tell me if you would, why do you think Harry wants to marry you?”

“I’m his true love. And the little sister of his best friend. And I’m plucky. And experienced in the ways of love. And determined. And financially needy. And a Weasley?”

“Right. I forgot. Turn out your pockets, Miss Weasley.”

Thirty-seven different potions vials hit the floor.

“So, you were going to drug him to the gills and marry him?”

“It’s the Weasley, err, Prewett way. Mummy taught me.”

“You didn’t think to just ask him out on a date?”

“Oh, no, he’s clueless. I dated Neville and Harry didn’t react. Then I dated Michael Corner, nothing. Then the entire Hufflepuff Quidditch team, cause Diggory was cute. Too bad he died, really. Oh well. Then the Ravenclaw Gobstones Club. The people who say the quiet ones are kinky are mostly right...some of them are also dirty, dirty boys. Dirty! Then I also ‘dated’ the four straight boys in Slytherin...who all promptly turned gay, I wonder why?”

Remus sighed. "Maybe Harry doesn't like redheads?"

"But his mother was a redhead? He's gotta be into redheads. I'd be the perfect bride...and pimp...for a boy like Harry. Boys always go for women like their mothers. My Mummy said so. And if they don't, well then, that's what potions are for."

Remus almost laughed at that, but tamped the inappropriate giggle down.

"So, you get more rides than a school broom and you think that's supposed to interest Harry? He's a shy kid who doesn't like his fame. I doubt he'd like a stalker like you. He definitely won't like coming in behind four gay Slytherin boys." The glazed over eyes on the dim-witted girl didn't seem to register anything.

"Excuse me, Miss Weasley. Have you even met him?"

"Oh, yes, one time I tried to steal some of his toe nails. And another time I tried to barge in on him in the shower room. Then there was the time he saved my life and almost died. Then I wanted to get one of his dirty socks for a ritual I was planning. And another time...."

"Toe nails? Dirty socks?"

"Toe nails. For the love slave potion. It's one of Mummy's best sellers."

Remus shook his head and rubbed her temples.

"If Molly is selling love potions, how come you guys are broke all the time?"

"She does it as a labor of love. Barely makes back the ingredient cost."

"Why?"

"She thinks every good witch should have a husband under her heel and three to seven attentive lovers on the side."

“Gaak,” Remus ‘said.’ “Poor Arthur.”

“The potion gives you a nice floaty feeling. It’s why he likes Muggles so much, Mum says. Better to focus on non-magical things that Mum has no interest in.”

“I see. And that’s what you want for Harry?”

“Of course. He’s wealthy, and kind, and a pushover, and handsome, and he could zone out about Quidditch while I rule with an iron fist. I’ll be able to squander all his money in a few months; it’s the Weasley family talent. It’ll be a match made in heaven.”

Remus was at a loss as to how to proceed. He decided to be direct. “Miss Weasley, you know that Harry isn’t interested in you. You know he’s also too nice to tell you that to your face. So...why don’t I play the bad guy tonight. You will stop this foolishness...or I will take some of Harry’s money, buy the mortgage note on your parents’ house, and throw you all into the ditch. How’s that for a threat?”

“You think the Burrow is that much better than a ditch?”

“Right. How about this? I’ll take out an ad in the Daily Prophet and explain what a scarlet woman you are....”

“All the better. More boys would know I was recruiting.”

“Recruiting?”

“For my three to seven lovers.”

“Gaak!”

“Ha. Top that, Professor.”

“Fine, then. I’ll clap you in a full body chastity suit and you’ll never get frisky with another boy again.”

Ginny broke down in tears at that thought. "How could you be so cruel?"

"I'm a werewolf. We kill animals in the forest and eat them raw. I think I could stomach putting you in a suit that would keep the men of Britain safe from your insanity."

"No."

"Oh, yes. Unless you give up this ridiculous quest. You know what, I'm going to throw you into one of my werewolf-proof rooms downstairs...for trespassing. You can give me your answer tomorrow."

Remus grabbed the young, distraught woman and drug her downstairs. Remus walked back into the room after putting the crazy girl into restraints she liked a lot more than she should have.

"What's wrong with her?" He was speaking to himself, but Harry poked his head out from the kitchen.

"Thanks for dealing with that, Remus. A brave thing."

"You're the one who plays with the nundu, cleans it, and keeps it fed. I'd say that was pretty brave, Harry...and you're welcome. I always thought there was something off in that little girl. Who knows what Molly's filled her head with."

Remus began to clean up the vials Ginny had emptied from her pockets. "Lookee here, Mammee Molly's Liquid Love, Guaranteed Fertility Every Time."

Harry shivered a bit before he turned around and began to walk away. "I'll marry for love, not because of a drug induced stupor," Harry said as he disappeared.

"That's for the best, I think."

Remus picked up the bottle and decided to at least show it to his captive. She was, so far, quite a lot of fun.

It wasn't appropriate for a drug addled potential husband...but for a kinky girlfriend? Perhaps. He'd have to ask. So far Tonks hadn't said no to anything...not one thing.

This whole dating thing was even better than Sirius, Fred, or George had ever said.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

## Harry Potter and the Kurtz Estate, Chapter 4

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Death Eater Team Beta landed in the jungle an hour after the Alpha Team failed to report in. Potions Master Beta Severus Snape hated teaching dunderheads, but he hated leading dunderheads even more. That Flint boy couldn't tell his wand from his ear wax...and that Higgs boy was just barely cognizant enough not to be counted as an inferus.

Still, Snape realized, poor Lucius had been sent off with Goyle and Crabbe. They'd probably gotten hungry twenty minutes into the jungle and slaughtered everyone else in order to have a snack. Why did purebloods as a rule have to be insane, mentally stunted, or completely and unredeemably venal?

Bah, Snape knew he was the only decent Death Eater (as the only surviving half blood). And he was mostly on Dumbledore's side. Except for when the Dark Lord offered up the more...interesting activities. Then he was firmly for the Dark, for about five or seven minutes or so, which included the obligatory five minutes of mirthful, evil laughter after finishing up with his date, er, victim.

Snape turned to his dunderheads for this mission. He had to give an inspirational address before they began to search for Potter...who Snape planned to torture for a good twenty minutes before returning him to the Dark Lord...and then informing Dumbledore about it, who would throw up his hands and refuse to mount a rescue mission. Life was good.

"Ahem, you sniveling pond scum, listen up. Potter's a moron, but we're in a jungle so I want you to pay attention. No Killing Curses, as we need Potter alive. However, if you annoy me, I will not hesitate to render you down for potions ingredients. I'm out of human liver and could use some more bile. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, Potions Master Beta."

"Good. We need to go south."

With that, the seven people on his team took off in seven different directions, none of which was south according to the compass Severus had.

“Merciful Merlin. Should I kill them now, find Potter, and claim an accident got the rest of them? I think I should...”

Snape pulled out his wand, with a cutting curse on his tongue, when he stepped on something that made a tremendous cracking sound.

Snape dropped his wand arm and looked down. He’d just stepped on a massive shell...a dragon shell. Merciful Merlin. It was massive and worth a small fortune.

“Death Eaters to me. Gather as much of this shell as you can. We can use it to make the Master many valuable potions....” Well, it was mostly true. The shell would certainly make Snape rich selling youth potions and fire-prevention elixirs.

Higgs brought Snape rocks instead and shells, dumb kid. Flint tried and tried to pick up a bit of shell he was partially standing on. It was going to be a long...albeit profitable night.

But there was a problem. It took Snape a while to realize one simple truth.

Where there were dragon eggs...there were dragons.

Of course, this only occurred to him when his arms, robes, and mouth were filled with shards of dragon egg...and when the first of five massive dragons began attacking with a shocking silver flame.

Snape couldn’t or wouldn’t drop the valuable dragon egg shell fragments to help save his people from a gruesome fate. Instead he attempted to apparate away...just in the nick of time. Silver flames licked at her Snape had just been. Suckers!

But...what was that? Snape felt the flames somehow. He was a good hundred meters away now, but he still felt it.



Severus looked down and saw he was a lot closer to the ground than he'd remembered. In fact, his pelvis was now even with the ground. Where were his legs? What had happened?

Snape was a potions master. He was better than his wand. He vastly preferred his cauldron and stirring rod...and the smells of decay and mould. It wasn't that he couldn't cast spells very well...he just preferred not to, you see.

In fact, he hadn't splinched himself in months, okay, weeks. But he'd never done anything this bad.

"No," he screamed, drawing attention to himself. In his sadness, at leaving behind a whole pile of the dragon egg with the lower half of his robes plus his legs, he didn't care.

"Damn you, Potter."

The half-Snape bellowed in rage and didn't even try to apparate again as he watched two dragons share his legs as an after dinner snack. And then he watched the largest of the five dragons begin eying him.

The dragon got closer and closer...and still Snape didn't stop clutching at the dragon egg fragments.

"Damn you, Potter."

After all, everything was Potter's fault. Snape went unconscious just as the dragon reared up.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Shacklebolt had been shaking his head all night long. First, Albus made the crackpot decision to send their youngest Auror off while their most worthless member...go figure how that rescue mission failed.

Now Albus demanded that Shacklebolt lead a team to rescue Potter, Tonks, and Fletcher.

What a mess. (Shacklebolt had tried to find Minerva to get Albus to stop, but she'd been away from Hogwarts at the time.)

Arthur was a nice man, but he was basically a paper pusher in the Ministry. He did a little field work, but it was mostly dispelling enchantments cast by drunk wizards on a dare. (And enchanted objects didn't shoot back spells; a biting toilet seat just tried to...well, bite your bum.) Weasley hadn't cast even a stupefy in the line of duty in a decade or more.

Hestia Jones was a nice woman (and hot, to boot), but she was a junior healer and had even less combat experience than Arthur did.

Kingsley didn't know what would happen if they got into a firefight. It could get bloody fast. Damn that Albus. Couldn't he have sent along Moody at least? The old man could still sling a dozen curses a minute.

Kingsley turned around and visually surveyed the area. He also noticed that Arthur and Hestia had both been thrown to the ground by the particularly nasty portkey they'd used to get here.

"Up and at 'em. We've got precious cargo to retrieve and secure," Kingsley said.

"He's a nice boy, Harry is. Lives with Muggle, you know, fascinating creatures. Perhaps he'll have a few gadgets laying around that I can borrow. Molly will fix him some pancakes when we get him back. I'm hungry, are you?"

Kingsley rolled his eyes. Ol' Muggle-Mad Weasley struck again. He couldn't keep a straight narrative in his mind for more than a minute, unless it was about a rubber duck or a battery or something.

Hestia seemed to stare at Arthur as if the man was an odd variety of body fungus. "Do we have any specifics, Kingsley, on where the boy might be?"

"No. We'll just have to search everything down here."

“Oh look,” Arthur said. “A building.”

Kingsley pivoted and saw that there was, in fact, a building in the middle of the jungle. It was small, but it was big enough for someone to live in. Someone hiding out...someone like Harry.

“Okay, let’s be quiet. The boy’s probably asleep. Hestia, you open the door on three. Arthur, you cast a stupefy inside. Then we’ll all head inside – and Hestia, be sure to close the door behind you. We wouldn’t want Harry escaping in the confusion, would we?”

“Of course not, Kingsley.” Hestia didn’t even think of questioning why they just couldn’t knock on the door...and ask if Harry wanted help getting back to Britain. If kidnapping was the order of the day, she was game.

A moment later, the plan went off just like Kingsley ordered. Arthur’s stunner was a bit weak, but it was a stunner. Then all three crowded into the darkened shack while Hestia closed the door.

Hestia was the first one to light up her wand, but was the second one to start screaming.

Arthur sounded like a dying, old woman.

Apparently his son Ron wasn’t the only Weasley deathly afraid of spiders. And the room was completely packed with spiders, thousands of them, tens of thousands.

“Retreat,” Kingsley shouted.

Hestia pushed at the door...and nothing happened.

“Did you lock it,” she shouted at Kingsley.

“No. No. Get it open.”

“It won’t open....”

The room filled with the tiny, insistent clacking of jaws. "They're attacking," Arthur shouted. "Get the spray bomb, the one with the muggle poison in it. No, don't let them bite me. Get the shot bomb. Get the gadget. Help!"

Kingsley didn't know what Arthur was talking about. They hadn't brought any muggle poison with them.

Arthur began literally climbing Kingsley in his effort to get out of the spider hut. He pounded on the tin roof...and managed to dislodge a sack of spider eggs which went down the back of his robes.

Arthur screamed and fell backward, bringing down Kingsley and Hestia with him. All three landed in a jumble of arms, legs, robes, and spiders.

"I'm too...nice to die," Arthur moaned.

"I'm too pretty to die," Hestia added.

"I'm too damned busy to die," Kingsley shouted. "I'm the only Merlin befouled black man working for the Ministry. I serve on eight different internal boards trying to promote racial equality; three of them I'm the sole member of. Plus I'm doing this shtick for Albus. I don't have time to die."

The spiders just began biting him all the harder.

Hestia and Arthur were already unconscious while Kingsley continued his rant long into the night. He really was too...angry to die.

"I don't want any Merlin-forsaken spiders in this Merlin-forsaken hut. Out! Out! OUT!"

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dawlish, the head of Fudge's personal guard, and Umbridge portkeyed back to Africa. Dolores was shaking the moment they were dumped in the jungle.

“Good lord, Dolores. There are no flying snakes here. Stop quivering. It’s making my stomach upset.”

She broke into tears. “No more torture. No more, please.”

Dawlish, like many of the people who worked around Cornelius Fudge, had a very good impression of the diminutive man. So he decided to use it.

“Dolores, stop wasting time.”

“Yes, Master,” she replied automatically, before looking around in wonder.

“Where did he go?”

Dawlish smirked. The woman was so gullible. “He’s omnipotent, Dolores, as you well know. He doesn’t need to be here, in person, to speak to us.”

“Of course, Senior Auror. I hope Cornelius will forgive me.”

“He’s not looking terribly merciful. But, if we were to quickly find Potter without suffering any mishaps, then perhaps he’d be forgiving. Right?”

“Absolutely. I brought extra supplies this time,” she said, as she began to walk into the darkness.

She pulled out a massive jar. “This is snake repellent. I make it from my own putrid sweat.”

She pulled out a large sack. “This is big game repellent. I made it from my ground up undergarments after they get too stiff....”

“Why don’t you just wash them?”

“Wash? Muggles wash. Witches recycle.”

"I see." Dawlish was truly revolted, but he couldn't help but ask about the air tight canister she'd just pulled out of her bag. "And what's that?"

"Bird and insect repellent. I made it by fermenting my own flatulence.... Waste not, want not."

Dawlish turned green...heard Dolores screaming...and then felt himself being dragged into a newly opened hole in the ground. It seemed Dolores' excess weight had broken a secure wooden grating...and she had grabbed for the nearest thing to save her multi-chinned neck...and had dragged Dawlish into this odd room with her.

Dawlish stood up and was sorely tempted to kick Dolores. (She was unconscious, so it wouldn't be as much fun.) The woman was a walking nightmare. Everything she touched fell apart...oh Merlin, what was that smell?

It seemed Dolores' jars of sweat, flatulence, and ground up underwear had broken open. It smelled like the dead center of a stagnant sewer line.

He keeled over looking for a safe place to vomit when he heard something moving in the darkness. He reached for his wand and lit it up.

His eyes caught the remains of the wooden grate Dolores had broken through. "WARNING: Manteras / Chemicores Present. Restricted Access."

What in the blazes was a mantera? Dawlish looked down at the still unmoving Dolores and wished she'd died in the fall.

Then he looked up. He was definitely in an underground cave. He'd have to levitate himself out.

He looked at Dolores again...and decided she could stay behind, the fat disaster.

He waved his wand and began to rise in the air when he felt something tear into the flesh of his leg. He looked down...and dropped his wand. Some kind of odd little goat-like creature had stingers for legs...and one of those stingers was currently in his leg.

“Help. Help me, you fat bureaucrat. Wake up. Help me.”

Another creature, this one looking like a cuddly sort of demon opened its mouth, and showed it had a stinger instead of a tongue. That one hit Dawlish, too.

Sometime in the middle of Dawlish making the acquaintance of all the offspring of a manticores and a chimera, Dolores woke up from her fall, saw her colleague being attacked, and activated (for a second time that night) her super secret Ministry portkey.

“Ha!” she sang out as she disappeared. “Dawlish wasn’t important enough to have one.”

Dolores escaped again...but she’d left ample samples of her scent behind. The strange crossbreeds in the cavern were massively irritated by it.

The smell had been enough to wake them all from their slumber. They wouldn’t forget.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Tonks had on a few ripped bits of clothing and she could hear her pursuer right behind her. Then she heard Remus stop running...and he wasn’t even breathing hard yet...so she stopped running and turned around.

Their little game in the prickly night air was apparently on hold.

“Tonks, hold up, something has disturbed the occamy hut. I need to take a look, alright?”

“As long as there will be more chasing...and you know...afterward.”

“Count on it. The big bad bounty hunter hasn’t captured his quarry yet.”

Tonks blushed and giggled.

Remus walked around the occamy hut. No one had made it in through the door...but perhaps someone had met up with the rather...stringent...portkey disruption wards.

Remus pulled out his wand, cast the unlocking charm at the occamy hut, and saw the door open. There was someone inside on the floor. He looked like he’d been bitten...lucky for him these occamy had been freshly milked for their venom less than a day ago. The bites would be painful, not fatal, even if he did look like a bloated beach ball right now.

Remus levitated the ginger haired young man from the building and resealed the door.

“Tonks, want to help me with this one. Idiot was dumb enough to take a portkey.”

“Looks like a Weasley.”

“Oh, right. I didn’t notice with all the swelling. Probably Percy.”

“Oh, right, Percy the Weasel. I remember all about the little tattle tale. Thought he was perfect.”

“You got it. He was a shit when I taught at Hogwarts. The boy could barely hold a wand, but he tried to instruct me on how to kill a vampire. Bigger ponce than Lockhart. I thought about calling up my old friend Laszlo, the most feared vampire in all of Transylvania, just to put the fear of Merlin into the prat.”

Tonks laughed. “He was a couple years younger than me and constantly annoying. Save for that one time. I found him on prefect patrols when he was a third year. He was in a broom closet with a crying girl. Percy’s pants were open. Let’s just say I didn’t see very



much of interest...and I could understand why the poor girl was crying. Sexual frustration is very disturbing.”

Remus floated the unconscious joke back toward the combination library and town bar. The town’s clinical resources were all stashed upstairs. Percy would need an anti-venom at the very least.

“Well, let’s get him fixed up. Then, as a prisoner of What’s-With-All-These-People, The Congo, I’ll fulfill my duty by turning him over to our reverend and innkeeper for prank-based experimentation.”

“Oh, sounds good to me.”

Remus quickly stuck a few syringes into the unconscious, bloated Percy Weasley and then levitated him down the stairs to the werewolf cages. That crazy Ginny was sleeping in one with a smile on her face, so Remus tossed the rapidly deflating Percy into another.

Tonks giggled when Remus was done with his official work. The pair made it back outside again...and then the game resumed.

“Oh, please, you’ve gotta believe me. I’m innocent; completely naïve. Mister, please believe me.”

“I’ve got a warrant for your...ahem, seduction, little miss, and I always get my woman.”

“Oh, no, not seduction. Anything but seduction.”

“Oh, yes.”

“No chains, either, mister.”

“There will be chains.”

“And no hot wax...”

Tonks stayed in character pretty well as she ran into the forest...save for the little bits of giggling she did now and again.

Remus had a hard time running slow enough to let Tonks stay in the lead. This was a good game, though, and Remus was willing to go wherever Tonks might choose to take it.

“Run, my little chickadee. The Big Bad Wolf will catch you. He always does.”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The town reverend and innkeeper, also known as Fred and George, walked out to the bundimun slime pond about one thirty in the morning. Their current experiments on, ahem, adult prank items, namely disappearing clothing, were coming along well.

But, they needed more slime.

George removed the well cover and Fred dropped the bucket inside. When he pulled it out, Fred noticed a particularly ugly beetle sitting atop the slime.

“Dung beetle, eh, George?”

“Ugly sucker.”

“Well, let’s throw it where it’ll be happy.”

George took the unconscious beetle in his gloved hand and walked over to the gated nundu enclosure (outer fence number three). He opened up another grate and threw the beetle inside.

Just as she was about to land, Rita Skeeter woke up in her animal form and started flapping her wings as best as she could. But the grate was back in place before she got some lift.

She eventually had to land as she was in extreme pain.

She discovered there was something worse than clothes-eating slime...namely, fermented nundu dung.

She passed out again from the horrifying smell. It was a pity she didn't realize the properties of fermented nundu dung.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The Quidditch teams found a new spot to set up. It took only twenty minutes to clear a new practice pitch.

No goats showed up this time...and everyone was careful to look for more Golden Snidgets. They hadn't returned either.

"In the air," the Puddlemere Captain shouted. "We were 40-20 when we called it. No one gets to count the Snidgets for points."

This game went a lot better than the last one. The score was 120-100 when a series of noises rang through the jungle. The Falcons Captain looked down.

"Looks like that miserable P.R. man finally sent us an audience. They look a bit young to be going to a charity match, though."

"They really are," the Puddlemere Captain agreed. "Save for the hag near the back. Do we need to investigate this?"

"Better. No way an ancient hag should be hanging out with all those cute little numbers."

Both teams flew down and saw that there was a gaggle of women, ranged in age from 13 to 138 (after all, Griselda Marchbanks, honorary chairwitch of the Harry Potter Fanclub, was the oldest witch currently alive).

Susan Bones stepped forward and said, "Hello. Do you know where Harry Potter is? We're here to marry him."

"Marry him," the Falcon Captain said, stupidly.

Susan leered at the athlete for a moment before responding. "Well, the marriage is optional. But we'd all like to consummate a union with

him. We were commanded by our Lord to ensure we were all impregnated....”

The old witch stepped forward. “Don’t be silly girl. Keep the details to yourself.” She turned to the Quidditch Captain. “Can you tell us where the boy is?”

“Don’t know. I thought he was supposed to be our audience, you know, for our charity Quidditch match.”

“Quidditch,” Susan said. “Harry would come to a Quidditch match. We’ll stay here until Harry shows up....”

The bobbing heads of the fan club girls was interrupted...not by logic. (After all, it was well after midnight, not ideal time for Quidditch.) And not by the appearance of Harry. And not by the appearance of goats, snidgets, or any cuddly creatures.

No, the entire Harry Potter Fan Club convention was interrupted...by surprisingly squishy bludgers, dozens of them, that flew out from the branches of the surrounding jungle.

The first screams were of surprise...and the later ones of disgust.

The magical flying bludgers from the jungle weren’t of stone or steel...they were of a more earthy composition. Still warm, it seemed, from the chimps and apes who threw the lumps through the air.

The Great Congolese Poo War of 1995 lasted for twenty minutes. Poor Susan was coated from top to bottom. The Quidditch players had wisely left the fangirls to the shower...and had gone off again to scout out a new place to finish off their charity match.

The poor fan girls had tried to seek shelter, to erect stone barriers, to set up shields to keep the poo away...but nothing worked.

Harry Potter sat in the tree branches with a dozen transfigured monkeys – Harry had learned one or two useful things in McGonagall’s class – and kept his snickering to a bare minimum.

Perhaps these fangirls would learn something...nah, it would take more than this 'little' hint.

Fangirls were a bit dense.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Sirius Black wandered outside for his usual three a.m. walk. Since leaving Azkaban he hadn't slept well...and rarely for more than three hours at a time.

But he had a good feeling about tonight. The gods were smiling.

Remus had found that smoking hottie. (Sirius tried to put it out of his mind that said hottie was related to him...even though some purebloods were into that sort of thing.)

Fred and George had gotten that tricky clothes-disappearing prank to finally work. Something about the bundimun slime seemed to work better. Odd, but wonderful.

Sirius wondered what he would find tonight.

He did the standard Harry-rounds, checking on this and that animal, even detouring to check on the goats (all of which seemed to have disappeared, odd). He did avoid the nundu enclosure, as every sane person did.

Sirius found what he was hoping for when he heard snoring from one of the spider huts...the Indonesian sleeping spider hut.

He opened the door and found three people asleep inside. Two men (one was a Weasley)...and one smoking hot chiquita.

It took Sirius a moment or three to remember he'd met her before. He'd been a big bad Seventh Year when she started at Hogwarts. Right...right...Hestia, the Hufflepuff. She was now Hestia the Hottie!

And unconscious.

It would make it easier to take her out of the spider hut...and then he'd have to wake her. After all, for the games Sirius liked to play (Monopoly, Risk, Texas Hold 'em, Clue, Clothes Optional Twister), all the participants needed to be fully awake.

Of course, all that was Phase One of the Serious Seduction Strategy (patented in seven nations worldwide).

Phase Two was the fun part: role playing games. (Lucky bastard Remus found a chiquita who liked games from the start.) What could he rustle up on short notice?

There was innocent pupil and depraved instructor, always a good time...hold on, she had gone to a boarding school in Scotland, it might not be anything new to her. (Hogwarts always had three or four serious perverts on staff...in addition to the couple hundred in the student body. Good chance Hestia had already played this game before.)

Innocent politician and depraved Undersecretary. That one allowed for the best costumes: powdered wigs, a suit made out of peacock feathers, large feasts of delicacies including house elf balls and other disgusting fare, scepters and mitres and other symbols of office good for light spanking, and the like.

Innocent convict and depraved prison guard...hmm, that sounded fun. Sirius even had authentic clothing for both roles. He wondered if Hestia would mind dressing up as a randy dementor?

Innocent house wife and depraved milk delivery man. Nice. The ranch even had fresh goat's milk to use as a prop.

What else had he tried? Innocent assistant and depraved mad scientist. Innocent pizza delivery boy and depraved Malfoy house elf. Innocent Hogwarts game keeper and depraved thestral. Hmm, maybe Sirius should keep the more involved role playing options secret for now.

Phase Three was a light snack: strawberries and whipped cream, cherries and whipped cream, banana splits with whipped cream,

chocolate nibs and whipped cream, Licorice Whips, er, Wands and whipped cream, or just plain whipped cream in cinnamon, lemon, or snozberry.

Phase Four was a relaxing run through a forest or a jungle – an idea which Remus had already purloined, so it would be skipped.

Phase Five was a relaxing skinny dip in some sort of lake or river...although the piranha had recently migrated from the Amazon to take up residence in their little stretch of the Congo...so maybe that was out, too. They could still do the erotic massage part of phase five, though.

Phase Six was a light session on the rack, an old Black Family bonding tradition that Sirius couldn't bother to part with. (He had moved a session with the Iron Maiden to the official fourth date.)

Phase Seven, of course, was breakfast in bed.

Phase Eight was kicking the girl out of bed and promising, in his most sincere voice, to call. And doing it all without smiling or laughing. (Sirius' animagus form was a dog, of course, a rarefied form of hound dog.)

The perfect first date for Sirius Black and his female of choice. It had worked dozens...okay, hundreds of times...before.

Sirius levitated Hestia the Hottie to the Mail Order Hut where he worked during the day...and woke the little lady up.

"Help," she whimpered before realizing she was no longer under attack from spiders. "Who are you?"

"I'm Sirius, your new boyfriend."

"Hold up. I missed a step or two. Sirius?"

"Exactly. Glad you've got some brains to go with that smoking body."

"Uh oh. And why am I your girlfriend?"

“Town law. You’re either a prisoner here in It’s-Raining-Smoking-Hotties, The Congo, or you’re a girlfriend. I made the choice for you.”

“Thanks, I guess. So...Sirius...you look a bit familiar, don’t you?”

“Probably. I’m a wanted fugitive back in Britain, the bunch of idiots.”

“Sirius...Black?”

“You remembered. Would you like to play Monopoly? Or Clue? Or Texas Hold ’em? I also have Risk.”

“I’m kinda tired,” Hestia said, faking a yawn.

“You’ve just been asleep for a few hours thanks to spider venom. I’d say you’d be raring to go now.”

“Clue, then.”

Sirius began undressing.

“Er, how about Monopoly?”

“Fine with me.” He continued undressing.

“Why not cards? Poker you said.”

“Fine,” Sirius said, grinning. He finished taking off his clothes.

Hestia’s eyes crossed for a moment and then she panted...before she regained temporary sanity.

“Why did you, ahem, disrobe?”

“Can’t cheat in poker if you’re not wearing clothes, right?”

“I see. And why did you start to get naked when I suggested Clue and Monopoly?”



“Well, for Clue, you have to examine the dead body for clues, so I take one for the team, while everyone else stays dressed. For Monopoly, of course, everyone starts out naked. You get a piece of clothing for every monopoly you form. Added incentive for the shy sort.”

“I see. Deal the cards, Sirius.”

“Get naked first, Hestia. Have to make sure you can’t cheat.”

Her lips pursed a bit. She didn’t know whether to be frightened out of her wits...merely annoyed...or severely turned on. She began to disrobe, as even nude card games were better than that spider hut.

She’d worry about her compatriots...later. She had some, er, chips to win. This was a weird, weird town...with a very friendly greeter. She did wonder how friendly exactly. He seemed like a puppy bouncing up and down with excitement.

“Let me finish off with the rules. Whoever gets a Royal Flush gets...well, it’s a surprise.”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Minerva walked into her office...err, the Headmaster’s office...and saw another batch of Order members disappearing. Albus was drooling on himself a bit, but seemed too happy. A happy Albus was a disobedient Albus.

“Did you just send more people to Africa?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“We must find Harry.”

“Have we heard back anything from the first two groups?”

"One mirror had some excited giggling. And the other sounded like someone was running...but no one responded."

"Did you send Fawkes to check on the situation?"

"Err, he doesn't like Africa."

The ancient phoenix squawked in disagreement. Apparently he liked Africa just fine, but his poor demented bonded hadn't asked him.

"Really, Albus. You could at least ensure our people are safe."

"I was going to. I sent out a call for all the hot girls from the sixth and seventh years to come to Hogwarts so I could send them into the jungle. They'd be sure to find Harry and convince him to return...."

"So...you think the reason we've failed is because we send old, ugly people?"

"Yes," Albus said, smiling.

"I'll tell Tonks and Hestia you said that."

"Err, right."

"Mr. Potter would have even less reason to return to Britain if we sent all the...attractive older witches off into the jungle. Wouldn't that just make him more likely to stay down there?"

"Don't question me, Minerva. I am brilliant and the Chief Warlock...."

That line of argument ended when Minerva pulled out her leather bullwhip and cracked it.

"Who is brilliant, worm?"

"You are, Deputy Headmistress."

"That's right. No more sending people to Africa unless I tell you it's okay, worm."

"But...we must get Harry back...he's vital to all my plots and plans...and to help me make some marmalade. I'm too old to go out and pick my own bitter oranges."

"Why do you need Harry? Why not just buy these bitter oranges at the store? Or buy a jar of marmalade?"

"It must be Harry and fresh bitter oranges. Harry Potter and the Quest for the Bitter Oranges. He'll be attacked by marmots and swallowed up in a Fire Swamp and then consumed, finally, in a quick sand pit...before the heroine jumps in and tries to save him. I've got it all sketched out here."

Albus held up what looked like a pillowcase covered in drool stains.

"No," Minerva said. "You're to stop plotting about that boy, Albus. We'll repatriate him so he can continue his education. But you're to leave him alone."

"Can I twinkle at him?"

"Only if you can twinkle without reading his mind? Or planting suggestions...."

Albus scowled for a moment. "Can I offer him homilies and obscure bits of assistance?"

"Only if your words don't send him off on another deadly mystery."

"You're taking all the fun out of being an academic administrator..."  
Albus perked up at that thought.

"No, Albus. I won't allow you the 'privilege' of what old Phineas Nigellus used to do to the first years. You will not be taking out your false teeth and scaring the children with some sort of transfiguration."

"Blast, woman."

Minerva cracked her whip again.

“Sorry, Deputy Headmistress.”

“We’re not sending off more meat for the grinder, Albus. No more Order members. They’re obviously poorly equipped to survive in the jungle. In fact, I’ll fetch the boy myself.”

“Thank you.”

“Now, punishment time. Albus, back in your harness.”

“Yes, Deputy Headmistress.” He made no move to get back into his harness, though.

“And, Albus?”

“Yes.”

“You didn’t send those people to their deaths just so that I would punish you?”

“Err, no?” He seemed unsure.

Minerva’s lips pursed in anger. “Use your wand for its disciplinary function, too.”

Albus looked like he wanted to cry.

“No lemon drops, not even the regular Muggle variety, for three months.”

“Deputy Headmistress, I must protest...”

“You probably killed eight or more people tonight, Albus. It’s rather mild discipline. You just enjoy sending people to their deaths too much. You even get Fawkes killed at least once per year. That’s not too awful considering he’s immortal, you know. But how many times have you gotten Mr. Filch killed? I’m surprised no one’s realized the man isn’t a squib, but an inferus. Did you really have to give him...or it...such a biting, acerbic personality to keep people from talking with

him and discovering the secret? And is it any wonder that Hagrid's dog, Fang, is such a coward? Why, just last year you had him devoured by acromantulas....just so you could resurrect him from the droppings.

"And the number of times you've killed Mr. Potter. It's a scandal. Madam Pomfrey put him back together after you let Quirrell kill him...and you modified his memory to think he'd survived...."

"No, Minerva, he did survive...."

"Hush, I'm in the middle of a good rant. And then that basilisk killed him...."

"No, Minerva, Fawkes saved the boy, against my wishes. I haven't had a chance to revivify Mr. Potter yet."

Minerva looked crossly at the still drooling Albus. "I'm going to have a Mind Healer examine you. And you'll cooperate and or I'll ensure you get put into the Severus Snape Ward, where they pioneered the use of yoghurt as a medical treatment."

"I like yoghurt with fruit. Blueberries or raspberries are nice."

"This yoghurt doesn't go in your mouth, worm."

Albus shivered a bit. "Yes, Deputy Headmistress."

"Now another thing, if you ever get enemies or followers to tattoo themselves again... why the punishment will be hell. I remember seeing Grindelwald after your duel with him. He had a huge tattoo across his back: 'I sold my soul to Albus Dumbledore and all I got was this lousy, itchy tattoo.' No more marking people. It gave Voldemort the idea, you remember?"

"No, Deputy Headmistress."

"So, remember, no manipulating people to their deaths and no more tattooing them."

“Yes, Deputy Headmistress.”

“Into your harness. And put your wand in its disciplinary...holster.”

With that unpleasant task done. Minerva plucked up a dirty sock from Albus’ desk and felt the portkey zip her away.

She’d have a submissive Harry back in Britain within the hour. No one could withstand the might – and glares – of the Deputy Headmistress.

She’d keep the boy safe at Hogwarts...even if it meant she had to bury the worm up to his eyebrows in fresh concrete deep in one of the sub-dungeons.

Yes, yes, that might just work. Actually, that was quite a good idea. Keep the old coot busy...while she ran the school unimpeded.

Very fresh concrete...and a house elf to keep Albus fed. What a wonderful plan.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

## Harry Potter and the Kurtz Estate, Chapter 5

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Minerva landed in the jungle and heard some rustling to her right. She decided she needed to put an end to the frivolity at once. There was, after all, deadly serious work to be done here. Potter needed to be rescued from his impetuosity.

She briskly walked through the forest and didn't put up with any nonsense from Devil's Snare or Tripping Vines or the Venus Man-Traps that attempted to greet her.

Her wand and her glare were more than enough to keep her safe.

She popped into another clearing and saw something truly grotesque. A mantichore and a chimera were engaged in some sort of...well, erotic tussling.

Minerva stepped into the center of the clearing and cleared her throat. "Stop this foolishness at once. Male abominations must be in their own beds at three o'clock in the morning. And female monstrosities must act like the monstrosities they are...not go parading around like common London tarts. If you get pregnant while you're here in my jungle clearing, I'll tell your parents."

Unfortunately for Minerva, chimeras and manticores weren't so proficient with the English language. They returned from the distraction back to their tussling...and both of them had numerous...er, stingers out preparing to...um, sting.

Unfortunately for the abomination and the monstrosity, Minerva had truly earned her Transfiguration Mastery all those years ago. In fact, she had terrified her examiners into giving her anything less than absolute full marks.

Her specialty? Cross-gender transfiguration. In fact, she was the one who permanently turned Waylon Smithers into Wilma Smithers all those years ago. That taught the old hound dog about dumping Minerva McGonagall at the Yule Ball!

With two deft flicks of her wand she changed the chimera and mantichore from male and female to...neuter and neuter. A lot of their, er, stingers and suckers and pustules and claws and fangs turned into nothing at all.

"You going to stop rolling around now?" she asked to the chagrined monsters.

"Good! Now, both of you lead me to Harry Potter as quickly as you can. And if you'd both hold off on trying to kill or eat him, I'd appreciate it."

With a pained, labored whine, the two neutered animals did precisely what McGonagall wanted. It was bad enough they'd lost their playtime, they did not want to see what the old witch could do if she were severely angry.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The Death Eater Team Gamma was filled with thirty-three Death Eaters and led by the Lestranges. Rodolphus grunted when he landed; Rabastan passed gas; and Bellatrix laughed and Crucio'd a nearby tree.

The others didn't fare so well. Three fell down a water well...and drowned. Another three landed in an African spiny tree and were impaled. Another three began bleeding profusely from their noses and collapsed. Another three appeared to be attacked by feral puffskeins and died. Another three disappeared into clouds of utter darkness, screamed for a few seconds, and disappeared completely. And the remainder began to choke on their own drool and flopped over, dead.

The three Lestranges, Mamma Bear, Idiot Bear, and Dummy Bear, all yawned at the loss of the bulk of Voldemort's force. They didn't check to see if any of the 'dead' people were actually dead before Bellatrix pointed at a thick chain-link fence and screamed. "He's in there."



The three bears ran off to investigate the triply fenced enclosure...while the 'drowned' death eaters crawled out of the well, and the 'impaled' death eaters removed the three inch thorns, and the rest of the death eaters applied the various cure-alls to the pranks they'd bought from Grim and Heckle Potions Purveyors.

The leader of this renegade group had their escape all planned out...now all they needed was some land for their commune...and some patchouli, couscous, bulgur, and some lava lamps.

Thus, it seems, that thirty Death Eaters deserted from their Master with no one the wiser. If one is to fake his own death, do it at the opportune moment.

The Lestranges had some difficulty scaling the three fences, wending their ways through the minefield between the second and innermost fences, and then swimming through the hundred yard moat surrounding the main enclosure. Someone obviously didn't want visitors.

Bellatrix landed near a concrete bunker coughing up mostly raw sewage and promising retribution. Rabastan arrived, having nearly drowned five times, with a big smile on his face. Rodolphus got out of the raw sewage and also had fond memories, namely of vacationing near the mouth of the Thames and attempting to drown his little brother several times a day in the sewage water.

Bellatrix had to keep applying stench-reducing charms to all three of them, as the two men in the group didn't seem to mind the smell of raw sewage. Said it reminded them of summer vacations.

It took her more than twenty minutes to even locate the entrance to the enclosure. She finally noticed a fine line in the solid stone...a line that gave way under her reductors to reveal a set of steps leading inside.

"Boy's paranoid to have holed up in a spot like this," Rabastan grunted.

"Well, we're after him. Not all that paranoid, is he?" Bellatrix asked.

“Less talking, more walking,” Rodolphus grunted, wheezing a bit. “Anyone got any fresh rainwater and grain alcohol. I’m in need of a drink....”

(He’d gotten quite out of shape after a dozen years in Azkaban.)

The stairs spiraled lower and lower. Bellatrix figured they had to be seventy meters underground by the time they arrived at a solid steel door. Rabastan wanted to blast it down.

“It’s probably warded, you inbred nancyboy,” Bellatrix mocked. “Why don’t we just try turning the handle, eh?”

The door did just open...and all three of the Death Eaters walked right in.

None of them noticed that the door closed with a silent grace...or that the door didn’t have a handle on the inside...or that they were now trapped in a stone room created seventy meters underground.

After a few minutes of searching the massive room, Rabastan had only found a small wicker basket with a sleeping black kitten inside it.

“Where’s Potter,” he grunted out. “His pet’s here, but not ‘im.”

“Haven’t found a damned thing in here,” Rodolphus chimed in.

Bellatrix wasn’t much for frivolity. “Keep looking.”

Rabastan wasn’t much amused by Bellatrix, the uppity snot. He began petting and poking at the kitten in the basket.

When the creature woke up and opened its jaws to meow, Rabastan realized he might have made a mistake. A thick black cloud of pestilence and disease poured out of the cat. Rabastan immediately began to cough up blood...which was bad enough in itself...until the tiny little kitten clawed the fully grown man and lopped off his left arm.

He didn't even think to scream until the tiny kitten had run over to Rodolphus and eaten the man's eat. How such a large object went into such a tiny kitten, Rabastan would never, ever know.

After he began screaming, Bellatrix whipped around, saw the tiny kitten, and cursed it. Instead of the Avada Kedavra curse killing the little animal, the sickly green curse enraged it...and made the kitten seem to swell up in size...from a tiny kitten to a fat, rather massive tom cat.

Her next curse, a Cruciatus, swelled the kitten up to being around the size of a Great Dane.

The daft woman didn't stop...and she cast again, a severing curse...which impacted and caused the hell cat to swell up to about the size of a small, adult horse.

Bellatrix died when the cat's breathe, claws, and teeth all impacted her at the same time. After the screaming died down, the only sound in the stone chamber was the crunching of bones.

A full hour later the only thing that remained was a well-sated kitten resting in a wicker basket. Three large piles...of something, mixed in with shards of rare wood and pieces of black fabric...stood waiting for pickup near the magical manure chute.

The nundu slept and dreamt happy dreams of crunchy humans. It wouldn't need to try to escape and feed again for eight or nine hours. Nice.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Minerva thanked the manticore and the chimera for leading her to a rather run down house...with the most interesting fencing...it looked like the whole place was surrounded with human skulls.

Nah, couldn't be. She chalked it up to a trick of the light...err, moonlight. Right.

Then she walked toward the house. Before she got inside, she heard a lot of clicking, clacking, and bellowing from behind her. Apparently the manticore and the chimera wanted to return to their festivities.

Minerva shrugged and flicked her wand. Soon...all the revolting stickers and suckers and pustules and fangs and claws were back in their proper places and the abomination and the monstrosity loped off back into the jungle to do Merlin knew what.

Minerva shivered for a moment and then walked right into the house. The inside was much, much nicer than the outside. None of those odd...fenceposts.

Minerva was just about to abandon her search of the downstairs when she came across Harry Potter, awake, and pouring a second cup of coffee. He handed it to her when she walked into the kitchen.

"Enough of this foolishness, Mr. Potter. We'll be returning to Britain immediately."

"Sit down, Professor. I guess I expected you would manage to make it in. Remus won the bet, though, you don't have a scratch on you...."

Minerva wasn't about to put up with any foolishness, so she grabbed her portkey in one hand and reached for Potter with the other...when she heard some growling at her feet.

Minerva looked down for a moment and dropped the portkey she'd been carrying. The smallest and most terrifying...animal she'd ever seen was growling at her. And it had eight legs...and it wasn't a spider.

"That's Cuddles, our quintaped."

Logic kicked in. "They only have five legs, Mr. Potter."

"Sit. Drink. Get refreshed. I'm sure it's been a long night, Professor. As for Cuddles, she's nursing three offspring right now...so she has five legs and three pedlings."

Minerva thumped down into a seat.

“She’s very protective. It’s best that you got rid of that dirty sock on the floor. She’s all about clean houses.”

“I see. Well, you seem well. When none of the Order members returned, we thought the worst of you.”

“I am safe. I cannot say the same for all the people who’ve portkeyed in here tonight. Doesn’t anyone know about anti-portkey wards? We use some weak and wacky ones here. Diverts people to inconvenient places. For example, the group with Moody, Mrs. Weasley, and Mr. Diggle wound up inside our aviary. Sad to say, Mrs. Weasley’s screeching woke up our thunderbird. Cranky animal...he shocked them all...they’re in our clinic now, but they’ll probably wake up tomorrow so we can put them in the prison.”

“Prison?”

“They came in without permission. After we finish talking, Professor, Cuddles and I will take you to the prison as well. Percy and Ginny Weasley are already there....”

“What?”

“And we’ve still got to recover a few others. One Mundungus Fletcher is in a snake pit at present; Mr. Weasley and an Auror named Shackbolt are in one of our spider huts....”

“I demand you release them immediately.”

Cuddles began to growl. Minerva stopped shouting in quick order.

“No. My town, my rules now, Professor.”

“But... But.... I am an adult, Mr. Potter.”

“And I am the Mayor. We’re the only town in a few hours walk in any direction.” Harry smirked a bit. “There is a cannibalistic wizard village

about two and a half hours north of here, by foot. They take their payment...in flesh.”

Minerva turned a bit pale, but she wasn’t backing down. “I have a wand. I can force you.”

“I dare you to try, Professor. You might get me, but you won’t get me and Cuddles. And if you do...well, you might get to meet some of our other interesting guests at the ranch. I keep my basilisk upstairs, if you’re interested.”

“A...basilisk?”

“Our bicorn is asleep out back with her thirteen children. The nundu can be quite the cute little bugger, but she’s about the most devious creature I’ve ever met. Buried underground in solid stone, contained by a moat, a minefield, and three electrified fences...the blasted nundu gets out once a day or so and picks off a couple of goats.”

“I see.” Her plans for a forcible removal went up in smoke. “What would it take to get you to come back to Britain, then? And to Hogwarts...and your friends?”

“Well, I’ve got some good friends here...and a business...and my own house, Professor.”

“But you’re not safe here...all these creatures...and the Death Eaters and Voldemort.”

“And I was safe at Hogwarts? How many Death Eaters have been inside it? How many served on the Board of Governors? Malfoy was one, but I seem to remember hearing that Ambrosius Nott was on the board, too. And Voldemort’s been there...and he’s plucked me out of the school grounds. I’d like to see him try to attack me here.”

“He will, Mr. Potter...”

“He already has, Professor. Has and failed. You’ll need to tell the Headmaster to start looking for new Potions Master....”

“What happened to Severus?”

Harry just smiled.

“What do you want, Harry?”

“Interesting you should ask, Professor. Where should we start the negotiations?”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

“Dolores, first you wake me up...to tell me you’ve failed again. Now you’re screaming about returning. I’ve already called in the Head Auror. We’re going to the Congo now. You, me, and Rufus. How much trouble can one little boy be?”

“It’s like hell on earth, Cornelius. Hold me. Don’t make me go back.”

“If I’ve told you once, Dolores, I’ve told you a million times. I respect your mind.... I couldn’t possibly do that other thing you keep asking for. It wouldn’t be right for, uh, ah, my wife. That’s right. I’m married, you remember. Fidelity and all that nonsense.”

“Yes,” she said, her face darkening.

“Have a house elf bon-bon while we wait for Rufus.”

The darkness disappeared off Dolores’ face as she gobbled up five or six of the revolting concoctions that Cornelius seemed to adore so much.

Scrimgeour eventually hobbled into the Minister’s office and then the three of them grabbed onto a portkey...and disappeared in a whirling, swirling sort of way...only to wind up hip deep (or chin deep for Dolores) in rather bracing water.

“Rufus, did you screw up that portkey?” Cornelius began to ask.

“We’re in hell,” Dolores began to wail.

“What in the world is nibbling on my bum,” Rufus shouted out, shocking the other two whiners into silence.

“Your bum,” Dolores said.

“Oh, it’s nibbling on mine too,” Cornelius said.

“We need to get out of this water,” Rufus said as he began pushing his way to the side of the river.

“Why isn’t anything nibbling on my bottom?” Dolores whined.

“Shut up, Dolores,” both Fudge and Scrimgeour shouted.

That’s when the water began to roil...and all hell did break loose. A dozen different kinds of poisonous water snakes popped up in the river...and Dolores could see small little fish that were attacking Cornelius’ fleshy bum.

She pulled out her super secret Ministry portkey to leave again – after all, if one is only good at one part of her job, shouldn’t it be the part that keeps her alive? – when a long fanged snake bit her on her hand.

The super secret portkey hit the water and lazily spun its way down to the river bottom past biting fish and deadly snakes as it disappeared from her view.

So nervous about her impending fate, Dolores leaped onto Cornelius’ back. “Save me.” Her added weight drove the man off his feet and they both landed under water...where they got better views of the snakes and the biting fish.

Rufus had, by this point, hobbled his way over to the river bank and pulled himself out. Because he was a nice guy, he pulled down a vine of some sort and threw it into the water to aid Cornelius and his whale of an assistant.

The nearly drowned Cornelius eventually grabbed onto the line...and Rufus pulled the useless pair over to the riverbank. Rufus helped



Cornelius up, but left the disagreeable whale to deal with her own fate. (That'd teach her to insult him for his limp.)

"What happened, Rufus?" spluttered Fudge.

"Must have a wicked portkey redirection charm. Allows people most of the way into an area before it shoots them off to someplace...unfortunate like this river. My arse still hurts...and by the way Dolores is screaming, I'd guess she's getting nibbled on as well."

"Can't you fish her out?"

"She's a witch, isn't she, she's got a wand, hasn't she. They teach levitation in first year charms."

Fudge nodded. "Dolores was never very good with a wand, if memory serves. But you're right. This will help her learn. It's good for the constitution."

"Exactly, why old Mr. Ogg broke more than one cane on my back when I was at Hogwarts. Torture was part of the curriculum then, not these namby pamby teachers."

"Oh, yes, the good old days. I remember Mr. Shiverton almost flaying my arm off with one of his whips. Of course, I probably shouldn't have tried sneaking a peek at the first year Hufflepuff girl's shower room," Fudge said with a dreamy smile on his face.

The pair discussed their fondest memories of being tortured at Hogwarts – "hung by my thumbs from the top of the Astronomy Tower," Rufus said, "for three hours" – while they ignored Dolores' screaming.

"I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore," she screeched. She even had her wand out and was trying to poke at the fish that were biting her bum, but she never thought to use her wand for anything remotely magical.

It seemed she was going to take it some more.

Finally she passed gas, and quite a few of the fish died, and she was able to stack their corpses into a sort of stairway so she could climb out of the river.

“Thanks for the help, boys.”

The sun was almost up by now...but all three had let their guard down. None of them even reacted when the first stunner flew into the group. Rufus thudded to the damp ground, then Cornelius, but Dolores wobbled to the side for a moment and missed the first one intended for her.

“Aurors, arrest these hooligans. They’re firing spells at me.”

The next spell was a paralyzing curse...which unfortunately allowed her mouth to continue functioning.

“Aurors! Help me, Aurors! I have a wand, but I don’t know any spells to cast. Help Aurors, attack these freaks.”

“They’re back in Britain lady...and you are trespassing in our jungle, right, brother?”

“Absolutely, brother. This fat one isn’t terribly appropriate for testing our disappearing clothing prank – as we haven’t manufactured any circus tents or muumuus yet – but we can find something for her.”

“Oh, yes, Reverend, we’ll find something for her. I’ll levitate the fat one; you get the dumb one and the lazy one.”

“Which is which?” the town’s Innkeeper asked.

“Does it matter?”

“Not in the slightest. Good thing they kept bellowing so loudly or we wouldn’t have heard it all the way to the town. Right kind of you, chaps. Best be off. A one and a two and...a lift.”

Even using his wand, the Innkeeper found it difficult to levitate the fat one. Oh, he'd get his 'volunteer' back...he'd have to create some new pranks in honor of this hefty, hefty woman.

Refused to use her own wand for self-defense, did she? Insisted people call in the Aurors.... Well, he could work with that.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

A bald, naked, albino bug finally crawled out of an opening to a natural cave system that ran under You'll-Get-Yours, The Congo. It had taken the bug hours and hours to crawl through the sludge...and it promptly collapsed at soon as it hit plain earth...and transformed into the ugliest bald, naked, albino woman ever seen in Africa.

She slept, twitching and moaning in pain, for about an hour before she woke up.

"Never again," she shouted.

"I could work delivering newspapers, that would be safe," the ugly crone muttered to herself. "But, no, I'd have to go out and see people."

She grunted and got to her knees.

"It's gotta be safer. I could work in the backroom at Flourish and Blotts, touching only books.... That would be safer."

She grunted again and stood up.

"No, I need to leave magic behind. Muggles can't torture me with slime and poo. They can't take away my fabulously styled hair or make my favorite quill dissolve. I'll become a journalist for a muggle newspaper. Yes, yes, that's it."

She looked around, trying to find her wand...only to remember it had disintegrated. She bent over and picked up a stick on the ground. It had some mud and something that smelled like urine. Perhaps it would work well enough for her in this emergency situation.

“But I might stray into magical areas accidentally...places where I could be attacked by slime...no, I can’t be a muggle journalist. It’s not safe.”

She shook her head violently.

“I’ll devote myself to a safe, muggle convent. I’ll snap my own wand and pray for forgiveness...in exchange for no more slime and no more poo.”

Rita then disappeared...but she didn’t land exactly where she expected. Her new ‘wand’ wasn’t terribly reliable, after all. Sun bleached birch with a mud and animal urine core is...temperamental at best.

In fact, she landed at the New Bethlehem Hospital in London – once known as Bedlam in an earlier age – and she was promptly tackled by four burly orderlies. They didn’t know who she was...or why she was naked...but she was obviously meant to be a patient here.

Rita shrieked about needing to get to a convent the entire time she was processed. In the years that followed she never regained her coloration...or her hair...or her sanity.

Surprisingly, no one much missed her, save for her boss at the Daily Prophet. But he was a forgetful sort so he usually only remembered about Rita when he had extra space to fill in the paper. Instead of searching her out, he wrote some cruel words about the present topic of the day and signed Rita’s name to it.

None of the general public ever noticed her missing.

It was best for all concerned.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The Falcons and Puddlemere finally found a new spot to finish off their charity match...which no one came to watch...and which had earned no money.

The team captains had both already made plans to resign from their respective teams. If the P.R. manager was that worthless to send the two teams to darkest Africa in the middle of the night to play a charity match, they could hire a brain-dead monkey and do better...with their own team. Maybe the Congolese Snidgets? It was an awfully beautiful name.

"Back up in the air, boys and girls. We've almost got the dawn, so I'm sure the game will be over by then. Couldn't be as simple as playing with some light."

"It was what 140-120?"

"I don't remember, to be honest?"

"Fine. Let's say 150 all."

"Cheating for a good cause?"

"Haven't you ever thrown a match because the owner demanded it? Damned bunch of owners get together to 'decide' the most important matches...and then we have to follow along as if we were muggle wrestlers on the tube. I'd hardly call this cheating."

The two sides got back into the air. It was nice to be playing in the almost dawn. At least the Chasers could finally see the quaffle.

The game progressed to 180-170 when yet more odd things began to happen. There were no goats, of course, or more fan girls. But the golden snidgets returned in force. They, in fact, were so numerous and so determined in chasing down the mechanical snitch that the Seekers for both teams landed...and let the Snidgets handle that portion of the game.

A few minutes later both team's Beaters were forced down...as the largest occamies anyone had ever seen began attacking the Bludgers and swatting them at the other occamies. The Beaters on the ground learned new things that they'd never even thought of

doing before. Could a Beater bat do the same kinds of things those occamy tails were doing?

It was another few minutes before both team's Captains and Keepers were forced down. After all three large black dragons had taken over one set of hoops...and two even larger dragons had taken over the other side. There was nothing to do but watch.

Luckily for the Chasers...who were petrified in fear in the middle of the field because of the presence of five massive dragons...six massive red 'birds' of some sort descended to the field. One of them speared the quaffle with a massive talon...and the Chasers fled.

What happened over the next few pre-dawn hours was undescrivable.

The dragons were natural keepers. The taloned birds only scored five times. And three quaffles were burnt to cinders.

The bludgers flew left, right, up, down, all across the field as the occamy squawked in devious pleasure. The snidgets didn't catch the mechanical snitch...rather they seemed to flirt with the shiny object en masse...and attempted to dare the other snidgets to greater and greater stunts.

A few of the watching players sketched out some of the 'plays' exhibited by the birds on the pitch...and began to design a new playbook...for a new team. The two Captain agreed. They'd form up a new team later that same day...after they found a sponsor.

The Congolese Snidgets. What a beautiful name.

There was some sort of potions supplier around here. Maybe they'd pay the sponsorship fees. It was a dream.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Hermione Granger portkeyed into the Congo at six o'clock. Her eagle eyes and elephant brain quickly deduced precisely what had happened here in the preceding twelve hours. Ginny had been restrained, check. The other fan girls had been humiliated, check.

Hermione loved it when a plan came together.

All the obsessive types were now well warned away from Harry. Now Operation: Yenta Hermione could begin. She loved Harry like a sister would...and wanted to make sure her friend found a girl really worthy of his attentions.

Ginny was nuts. Susan Bones was merely horny (and had heard too many rumors from gossiping Quidditch girls; damn them and their supposed peep hole into the boy's showers). Griselda Marchbanks was...just wrong. Every person Hermione had surreptitiously invited into the Harry Potter Fan Club had been someone to dispose of in the contest to win Harry's heart.

Now Hermione could find the right dozen contestants or so.

She'd already lined up the BBC to film the whole contest. The Americans had been filming contests like this for a while. They picked vacuous men to marry off and even worse women to offer them...this show would be different.

The dozen women would have to recite poetry – which would put anyone as fluffheaded as Lavender Brown right out of contention. And they would have to design an energy efficient car (preferably solar powered) to drive Harry around in for one date.

Oh, the wonderful stunts she'd designed. The girls would have to cooperate to build a small gazebo, with an organic farm attached, for one date. The bitchiest girl – which would eliminate anyone like Ginny Weasley – would be voted out.

And the very first stunt? Designed to show that girls were willing to shed the beautiful clothes and well-coifed hair, Hermione had created a stunt for the initial dozen girls to create a petting zoo...and wrangle twenty different animals into pens...so that they could take Harry there for a meet-and-greet.

They were all bound to get messy...and to ruin their clothes...and muss their hair. And they still had to do their best with what they were given to attract Harry, clueless boy that he was.

It was perfect.

And the flying date? The girls had to make working brooms and charm them themselves. Harry would fly each girl on the broom she'd made...how romantic...and sure to kick out anyone who didn't enjoy one of Harry's favorite hobbies.

And the dinner date? The girls would have to replace the house elves in the Hogwarts kitchens, slave over the hot stoves, and then make Harry something to nibble on while they talked. Hermione knew Harry could cook – the result of those miserable relatives of his – so she wanted a girl to be equally proficient.

And, even better, she and Ron would be there to watch the entire thing. Ron would become so utterly jealous watching a dozen women throw themselves at Harry that he'd self destruct...and Hermione would be there to pick up the pieces...and make her ginger-haired friend into an acceptable human being to date.

Right now he was way too gross...and uncouth...and rude...and, well, plain disgusting. She knew for a fact that Ron didn't even wash his own privates on a daily basis...how many ways could she say, 'eww?' But, after his mental breakdown, she'd retrain him: polite, well-groomed, interested in books as much as brooms. Oh yes, it was a plan to behold.

Hermione began to laugh evilly...before she snuck off to prepare. Harry's screen test was in two days and she needed to break the news to him that he'd been entered against his will into this televised dating show...and that he had to compete or face Hermione's wrath.

At least there wouldn't be any deadly creatures or Death Eaters involved...just pretty, smart girls...and a lot of dating...and perhaps some kissing and light petting. Much safer overall than the TriWizard, Hermione thought.



Who needed fame and a thousand galleons from a contest...when you could win a date with a great girl...and help your female best friend break your other best friend...to make him an acceptable human being?

Everyone wins.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Voldemort sat in his empty lair twiddling his thumbs. He had only Wormtail left...and that cur couldn't even twiddle his thumbs.

He needed a new strategy.

"I'm going to do something differently, aren't I? I have no followers left, save for Wormtail." Voldemort looked over for his lone remaining follower and scowled. "Wormtail, stop chugging milk. It won't make you drunk no matter how much you drink. And, no, I don't think it will kill you, either, no matter the sort of lactose intolerance you have. Might gum up your bowels, but it won't kill you? And close the damned refrigerator door. Do you think Malfoy's made of money?"

"Yes."

"Not after I took it all from him."

"Yes, Master." The sniveling rat put the milk back, but forgot to close the refrigerator door.

"Come here, you incompetent."

"Yes, Master."

"Did I tell you to close that refrigerator door?"

"Yes, Master."

"And you failed to do so. What should your punishment be?"

"More milk, Master?"

Voldemort rolled his eyes.

“I see. So I should feed a whiny baby ice cream to make it less fussy. Or give a child in mid-tantrum a giant bag of toys to get him to stop?”

Wormtail smiled and nodded.

“No, you dope. I deal out punishment.”

“Oh. Was that on the brochure?”

“Brochure?”

“The recruitment brochure.”

Voldemort looked at his rat and motioned for him to continue explaining.

“Antonin Dolohov gave me the brochure. It promised travel worldwide, exposure to fantastic magical beasts, on-the-job training, medical benefits, good wages, a pleasant working environment, choice of tasks....”

“Hahahaha.... You believed that? Hahahaha!”

“It was a lie? That’s evil.”

“It’s the business we’re in. I’m not the Bunny Lord...or the Quilted Charmin Lord...or the Have Some Jello Pudding Lord. I’m the Dark Lord, rat.”

“But I thought travel worldwide would mean Jamaica or the South Pacific or maybe a nice resort in Phuket. And your overgrown snake doesn’t qualify as a ‘fantastic magical beast’...and the only training I’ve ever got is how to hold in the pain from being tortured, you’ve never even taught me the Imperius Curse...”

“You’re a weak-willed moron, Wormtail, a waste of my time. I was shocked as could be you could cast the Killing Curse. Color me surprised....”

“And your ‘medical benefits,’ they suck!”

“You cut off your hand...I gave you a new one.”

“It’s silver.”

“It’s a fully functional hand.”

“It itches...and smells like Gouda cheese.”

“It could have smelled like Limberger.”

Wormtail scowled. “And the wage? ‘An equal portion of whatever you steal...and as many cowering wenches as you can find....’ That works out to about a galleon a week with how little we raid...and the pleasant working environment? You’re always zapping off crucios at anyone passing nearby the throne room. That hurts, you know.”

“Never felt it myself. Makes people dance around. It’s quite amusing to watch...and I love to hear screaming. Reminds me of the orphanage. It’s almost as much as popcorn.”

“Popcorn? You’re a dark lord....”

“Crucio.” Wormtail wailed and whimpered and flopped around on the floor for a good half minute.

“Yes, as good as popcorn, Wormtail. Speaking of popcorn, fetch me some, Wormtail. Now.”

“Yes, my Lord.”

Voldemort brooded in silence. He needed an advantage. He needed to negotiate an unfair agreement with a dumb opponent. He would have to go to Africa himself...and negotiate with that idiot Potter...so

he could buy himself some time. Taking over the world was really...really hard. Particularly with stupid minions.

Voldemort's rat returned with a large bowl of popcorn...salted and with lots and lots of butter.

"Wormtail, get me a portkey. I'm going to Africa to negotiate."

"Negotiate?"

Voldemort rolled his eyes. "I can't handle being a dark lord any longer. I have incompetent inbreds for followers. I'm retiring...." At Wormtail's huge eyes, Voldemort began to laugh. "Hahahaha! I am going to 'sue for peace'...and kill anyone who stands in my way. And kill everyone who bought into my nefarious plot. Hahahaha."

"Peace through terror?"

"Yes, and victory through lying. Precisely right. That might be the first wise thing you've ever said."

"Thank you, Master."

The rat looked expectant. Voldemort rolled his eyes again and nodded. "What do you want?"

"More milk, Master?"

Voldemort fingered the portkey to Africa (the popcorn box), then smiled. "Fine. It's your colorectal health, not mine."

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Amelia Bones arrived at the Ministry before the crack of dawn. You couldn't be a woman in politics and not work twice as hard as the next most competent man.

She walked into her office and glanced at the automatic personnel board. A good chunk of her Aurors were scheduled to deploy to...Africa? What?

Scrimgeour was already there. Fudge was there...as were his henchtoad and that weasel boy he employed.

“What in the bloody blazes is Fudge screwing up now?”

Amelia started digging through the memos explaining things. Eventually she found the one detailing the missions to capture Potter...for high treason? She stifled a laugh as she read the warrant.

It was about as professional as a kid scrawling with a crayon on a sheet of legal paper. Probably Umbridge's handiwork.

Why did people have to be so stupid?

Amelia sighed and decided to portkey to Africa in order to keep her idiot boss from starting another world war.

The things she did to keep the peace. Maybe it was time to retire. Aruba sounded nice.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Minerva McGonagall hadn't sweated this much since she'd taken her NEWTs. Whatever she offered Harry wasn't enough.

How did he get this good at negotiating?

“I'll make you Head Boy.”

“I'd just be a fifth year. Doesn't a seventh year deserve it more?”

Minerva wanted to swear. He had a perfectly reasonable explanation for refusing her every offer.

“Doesn't matter. Fine, I'll make you Quidditch captain, then.”

“Any of our team's chasers deserve it more.”

“Fine. I'll give you a Full Pass to the Restricted Section.”

“My name is Harry, not Hermione, Professor.”

Minerva snorted. She sometimes forgot how little Harry liked reading. She had little to offer. Harry had turned down better food, a private room, a personal house elf, a new Potions Professor, a guaranteed invitation to interview for an Auror position, an exorcism for Peeves, an exorcism for Professor Binns, a public flogging for Sybil Trelawney, expelling Draco Malfoy for being a ridiculous idiot. Nothing. None of it worked.

She had nothing left....

“How about I appoint you inspector of women’s undergarments?”

“What?” Harry spluttered, showing his first vulnerability of the bargaining session. Minerva smiled.

“Old position. Dirty old Phineas Nigellus used to appoint some lucky boy to make sure every witch was wearing undergarments. This was back in the day when the dress code was ‘black robe’ period. A lot of boys and most of the girls went, ahem, ‘Scottish.’ But it was dangerous for witches to be a bit too close to nature during broom-riding lessons. Splinters for the witches, of course, and the possibility of catching too much...er, skin for young wizards. Infirmary used to have thirty or forty wizards flying out of bounds or getting bucked off their brooms...because of unfortunate gusts of wind blowing up various witches’ robes....”

“Why would that appeal to me? You think I’m some sort of pervert?”

“You’re just barely fifteen. Of course you’re a pervert. Albus is nearing one hundred twenty years of age, he’s the biggest pervert I know. Thankfully your likely interests and his don’t mesh.”

Harry shook his head sadly. “No thanks.”

“I’ll boil Severus Snape down for potions ingredients, Harry. I’ll let you watch....”

“Like I told you, you don’t need to worry about him. I believe he currently graces the mantelpiece of our local dragon pack...shouting out insults constantly.”

“I’ll replace all the bad teachers...and make Quidditch an official course...”

“I’m Harry, not Ron Weasley. I like flying which is why I play Quidditch...it’s not because I’m obsessed with the game. As for the teachers, if you fire everyone like you just promised, who will be left to appoint new ones?”

“Why, I will.”

“I see.”

“How many times have you let Snape give detentions to Gryffindors for absurd reasons?”

“He’s a Hogwarts teacher. He has some leeway. We’re supposed to be a bit cruel, it simulates the real world, you understand.”

“And biased grading...grading that has helped to keep Gryffindors out of jobs that require good Potions marks?”

“Well....” Minerva stuttered.

“And how many times have you let him steal the House Cup because you didn’t call him on his biased point giving?”

“He... You see... I believed Albus about that....”

“So you’d have to fire yourself just as soon as you sack Dumbledore...”

“But I’ve been disciplining him for his bad performance as Headmaster.”

Harry just pursed his lips and looked unimpressed.

“His harness? And I took away his lemon drops? And I yelled at him for fifteen, no twenty minutes....”

“Did you change anything?”

“Err, no.”

“No,” Harry said. “Have any other baubles to tempt me with, Professor?”

“I might, Harry,” said a voice from the kitchen door. Harry looked up and saw a dark cloaked, pale man standing there.

“Alright,” Harry said. “Take a seat. I’ll fix us all some breakfast. I assume I can call you Tom?”

“Acceptable,” the no-nosed bastard said.

“Make me some, too,” said a woman standing at the door leading into the parlor. “I’ve been looking for you for fifteen minutes and worked up quite an appetite.”

“Alright. Breakfast for four. I don’t expect to see my owl order manager or his new friend or the town’s librarian and publican plus his new friend for some time. We might be joined by the reverend and the innkeeper, however, as I don’t think either of them scored a girlfriend last night.”

Minerva looked at Voldemort across the table and wondered what in the devil was going on?

“Mr. Potter, I insist you make this foul murderer leave.”

“No name calling, Professor. I didn’t tell you what I thought of you for leaving me with those awful relatives of mine all those years ago.”

Minerva blushed.

“Join me, Potter, and I will torture them for you.” Obviously Voldemort’s initial offer was right up his alley.



“Disregard that nonsense,” the stern woman who wasn’t a Professor said. “Help me find my idiot boss and his gaggle of the brain dead...and I’ll arrest your relatives and try them.”

“A fair trial?” Harry asked.

“Absolutely. Oh, can I have some orange juice? I get tired of pumpkin juice all the time,” Madam Bones said.

Harry pointed to the chill box. The Head of the DMLE got up and began to smile as she slurped down some delicious cold juice.

“Harry,” the Professor said, “I will ensure Albus never forces you to go back to them.”

Harry cracked a few eggs into a cast iron skillet and let his three suitors continue to argue amongst themselves. This was the best entertainment he’d had since Fred turned George into a llama, a female llama, for the afternoon.

“...pluck their hearts out with a spoon, it’ll hurt more...”

“...I’ll get Fudge to bore them into...er, drooling...”

“...Albus would be glad to give them all an extra-sour lemon drop and to gently scold them for being so rough on you....”

“...I’ll round them up in a fenced area and hire a bunch of thugs with guns to shoot at them...”

“...I’ll force them to work for the Goblins Relations Department so that the Gringotts crew can ‘lose’ them in the tunnels underneath the bank...”

“...I’ll get Madam Pince to check them out some books on better parenting of a magical child...”

Harry finally finished preparing breakfast. He held up his hand to get everyone quiet and set down four plates of eggs, bacon, toast, and goat ragout.

"Thank you all for your...suggestions about my relatives. But I have to tell you, I've already paid them back for their kindness."

"What?" Minerva said.

Voldemort and Amelia Bones were both too busy crunching away on goat bacon.

"Oh, yes, it's handled. I traded in the nineteen or so bribal contracts I'd accrued to the local shaman. He was glad to cast the spells for me, definitely not the kind of thing I would have learned at Hogwarts."

Voldemort perked up at that. "And what did you do?" He had a faintly salacious undertone to his question.

"The shaman cursed my cousin, Dudley, with a brittle bone disease for all those punches he delivered to me growing up. He won't be beating up anyone else ever again. My aunt, Petunia, got agoraphobia, condemning her to small, safe places as a reward for making me sleep in a cupboard all those years. My uncle's sister, Marge, a massive woman who loves only her dogs, got cynophobia, the fear of dogs. My uncle, Vernon, was given the gift of pica for all those years of malnourishment. He'll never eat anything beyond grass, dirty water, cigarette butts, and paint chips for the rest of his life...."

Minerva was aghast. Amelia was thoughtful. Voldemort was positively gleeful.

"What a wonderful idea," Voldemort said. "I don't think I could have done better myself."

Harry began eating his breakfast while the conversation around the table was nonexistent. The two women were mostly stunned; the other man was rethinking what he knew about his enemy.

Harry finished his breakfast, pushed his plate away, and said, "So, shall we start the bidding?"

"I'll get Albus to teach you how to make a Philosopher's Stone," Minerva said.

"I might want to bid on that," Voldemort chimed in.

Harry looked uninterested and turned to see what Amelia Bones might have to offer.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

A/N: We're almost done. Just one more chapter left.

## Harry Potter and the Kurtz Estate, Chapter 6

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Harry Potter smiled. He had the three sides of the looming war sitting in his kitchen...and he was in control. (How different would things have been had he stayed in Britain like a good little puppy?)

He had no intentions whatsoever of leaving the Congo...but he didn't reveal that fact. He expected to get some very excellent concessions in the next few hours. He expected to get exactly what he needed: a long, peaceful, happy life.

"Hold up, before we start bidding on me, why don't we all bid on the bounty of prisoners who arrived here last night?"

"Prisoners?" Amelia asked.

"Violated the sovereignty of Kiss-My-Ass, The Congo. They're mine to do with as I see fit. I expect our innkeeper and reverend have already begun experiments on some of them."

"I guess I'll have to bid for my boss...and maybe for my Head Auror," Amelia said. "But, I have no knowledge of any other Ministry personnel in Africa...as no one filed the official memoranda to indicate they were pursuing a case in the Congo."

"Death by paperwork? How...evilly bureaucratic," Voldemort said, more and more impressed. "I should bid for...hmm, who was the least worthless of my minions? Malfoy? He did 'donate' all that money, but he whines so much...and requires liters of hair product."

"Snape, perhaps? Dark, disturbing, and evil...but I could never be sure if he was evil for my cause or evil for the side of good...or evil just for the sake of evil. Then there's Bellatrix...a randy, dirty girl, oh hooo!, but she's about as close to the moon as she is to her sanity. Maybe I should just take someone evil and mostly useless, like Goyle...."

Harry's eyes turned from Voldemort. He wondered who Minerva might try to ransom.

A phoenix flamed into the room just as Minerva was about to speak and presented Minerva with a letter. "I have been...ahem, instructed...to bid for three piles of manure that were once the brothers Lestrange plus the wife Bellatrix. I am to offer...oh no...this phoenix...."

Fawkes squawked loudly.

Harry smiled at the fire bird. "Fawkes, if you want to, our Augurey is just upstairs. You could visit...and see if you have anything in common."

Fawkes squawked and disappeared in a dramatic, fiery sort of way.

"I wonder what a phoenix-augurey crossbreed is called?" Harry muttered.

Minerva looked even more severe than usual...and then set down the letter. "Albus wants me to negotiate for those three piles of Death Eater manure...I'd rather negotiate to have them burned so that Dumbledore can't practice his depraved arts upon them."

Voldemort stopped trying to figure out who was the least worthless of his minions and said, "He's a necromancer. Deliciously evil!"

"If he's practicing illegal necromantic magic, why don't you just have him arrested, Professor?" Harry asked. Madam Bones, wide eyed as had been the case lately, just nodded.

"He's a great wizard."

"He's a criminal."

"But he's a great wizard. It doesn't matter what he did to Mr. Filch, or Hagrid's dog, or even you, Mr. Potter. It was for the greater good." Minerva's eyes were twinkling madly now.

“So...he can do whatever the Merlin he wants, including keeping an inferus on staff, and no one cares?”

“Oh, the purebloods care...but not for the right reasons. Besides, Albus is a great wizard.”

“Professor, have you ever learned to resist the Imperius Curse?”

“Oh, no, not really. I was quite meek as a child, had no mind at all for witchery.”

“A bad Transfiguration student?”

“Until Albus began giving me private lessons....”

“Hmm.”

“You never had an interest in whips and harnesses until your lessons with Dumbledore?”

“No, can’t say that I had any inclinations that way.”

“So, you agree then?”

“Albus is a great wizard.”

“Finite Incantatem.”

The stern visage melted away into a tearful, frightened woman – one who looked rather like Mrs. Figg with all those cats and so much cabbage always at the boil in her kitchen.

“Oh, my, god. What have I been doing with my life,” Minerva shouted. “I wanted a dozen children and I have none. I wanted forty grandchildren and I have none. I wanted to become the world’s best baker...cookies and cakes and muffins, oh yes, muffins!...and I haven’t cooked a meal for myself in half a century! I’m a terrible teacher...and I scowl at children when I really want to hug them...and....”

“You were less whiny when you were under the Imperius Curse,” Voldemort said with a smirk.

The auction for the release of the prisoners was temporarily on hold.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Albus sat in his harness, humming an offkey tune, when he felt the fingers of fate flick down his spine. His grand plan to make Minerva seem like the brains of the operation had just gone awry.

Blast!

He called for Fawkes...but realized he'd sent his phoenix to Africa.

His wand was lodged up his...disciplinary holster. And his hands were wedged under his armpits as part of his harness.

How could he get free...and put everything back to rights? Blast! And double blast!

Eventually he forgot the feeling...and went back to singing offkey lullabies. Minerva would take care of everything. That's why he'd made her the way she was – spicy, cruel, demanding, and intimidating, the three...er, four keys to everyman's heart.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

It was nearing lunch time when the bidding resumed. The breakfast dishes were still on the table, although the warming charms were wearing off.

Madam Bones picked at the goat ragout...and wondered how much longer she had to be in this madhouse.

“Lot one,” Harry said, “is a rather weathered and used Auror named Dawlish.”

Amelia looked down at her fingernails and pretended to flick lint off them.

Voldemort held up his hand. "I've got a broken pocket watch."

Minerva clenched her jaw. "Can he teach? We need a new DADA instructor...."

Harry nodded, even though he knew nothing about this Auror. "Sure. Why not?"

"Alright then. I'll bid...Albus' sock collection."

Harry looked non-plussed. "Any other takers? Hmm, guess he is fairly worthless then. The reserve price hasn't been met, so no sale. Let's move on to Lot 2, an Auror named Shackbolt."

Amelia sat up. Kingsley was a very useful Auror. "I bid the Minister's collection of antique wall hangings."

Voldemort's eyes lit up at such a high offering price. "I bid my services to resurrect James and Lily Potter."

Harry rolled his eyes and snorted.

"Seriously, I'll bring back your parents."

"I've already seen some Inferi here. No thanks!"

"Then I revise my bid. I'll teach you everything I know."

"You'd lie to me. Tell me it was a cake baking charm and it would blow me up."

Voldemort scowled a bit before regrouping. "I'll give you Severus Snape to feed to your nundu."

"Our dragons have 'adopted' Snape. His screaming is apparently soothing to a newborn dragon...and Snape screams a lot. Besides, the nundu's full up from a trio of Lestranges."

"Lucius Malfoy?"



"The head yeti adopted him. He apparently looks quite a bit like a fluffy bunny rabbit and the yeti refuses to let Malfoy go. No big loss that one."

"Wormtail?"

"Hmm. I will accept that as a legitimate bid. Professor McGonagall?"

"Kingsley would make a superior DADA instructor. I bid the Hogwarts Library Restricted Section...."

"Again, Professor, I'm not Hermione."

"Sorry. Hmm, how about five fat cows? I sampled the goat ragout...rather decent...but I suspect you're missing good old fashioned beef."

"It's acceptable."

The bidding went from there for ownership of Auror Shackbolt. Amelia Bones threw in the Minister's finest crystal tea set, the Minister's dozen finest Persian rugs, the Minister's finest collection of blackmail materials, the Minister's most secret collection of bribery and corruption handbooks, and eight fat cows.

"Excellent, the Ministry's up to a bid of eight fat cows and a bunch of useless shite. Tom?"

"Wormtail, a cursed water goblet that desiccates people the more they drink, the evil overlord's checklist...."

"Excuse me?" Harry asked.

"Well, Harry, my boy, you're well on your way to conquering Africa. You just need the rest of the instructions."

"I'm not an evil overlord...."

"Let's find out. Do you mark your followers?"

"No. I mark no one...and I have friends rather than followers."

"Alright, do you teach your 'friends' accuracy in spell casting?"

"Well, we've done some magic, I guess...and I did yell at our reverend for having a lazy wand hand."

"Excellent. Wouldn't want your 'friends' to all aim at an enemy and have everyone miss him by a kilometer, right?" Voldemort smiled. "Have you ever killed an enemy?"

"Accidentally, I suppose."

"Keep dangerous creatures as pets?"

"Most everything around here could qualify as dangerous. So, yes."

"Do you render down your conquests for potions ingredients?"

Harry sighed. This wasn't going well. "Well, we did that to the lethifolds...."

"Ever create a hyper elaborate plot to kill an enemy...then walk away a few minutes before his demise?"

"Err, no."

Voldemort crowed. "Even I continually fall into that trap. You're beating me by a point, boy, I'm so proud..."

"I'm not an evil overlord," Harry protested.

Voldemort smiled. "Ever claimed a portion of unowned land for your own nefarious purposes?"

"No, I bought this land at a realtor in Diagon Alley."

"No one's perfect. Have you ever built a secret lair?"

“Maybe. We did have to dig pretty deep for the nundu....”

Voldemort’s smile was practically blinding. “Do you have a secret plan for world domination?”

“Well, Remus insisted I write up a business plan. I didn’t want to put in any Excel financial models....”

“Excel! Evil, evil, evil!”

“There’s nothing evil about a business plan,” Harry said. “I could show you the PowerPoint presentation....”

“PowerPoint? PowerPoint! Be still my foul, non-beating heart! You’re so evil... A plan for world domination in PowerPoint slides with bullet points! Hahahaha! You’re more evil than a lunchlady in a hairnet slopping out Salisbury steak to disgruntled school children!”

Harry clutched his head as Voldemort laughed and giggled like a schoolgirl. Why did Harry even bother to humor Tom? He wasn’t...that evil, was he?

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Luna arrived either a few days early or a few days late to start the internship her father had arranged for her. That was her official cover...secretly she was looking for rare animals that no one else knew existed.

Within three minutes of being in the Congo, Luna found eighteen varieties of rare animals hiding behind wooden huts and trees or winking at her from up in the taller branches.

Purple-Necked Humdingers...and Slack-Jawed Yokels...and Monkey-Brained Peacocks...and a Firefly Quackenbush...and a pair of highly noxious Chair-Bound Wither Nurses...and an ultra-rare Merkin Muffley.

“It’s anything but slim pickens here,” she muttered.

Luna sat down and pulled out a notepad and an odd quill from a bird no one believed to exist. She began to write with an ink made from saliva donated by a creature no one believed to exist.

She drew pictures of every animal she saw and got a few of the Purple-Necked Humdingers – which were rather fond of butterbeer corks – to come sit in her hands.

Luna quickly revised her opinion of this whole internship. This was the best trip her Daddy had ever arranged, even better than that visit to Chernobyl to see Glowing Fizzfubbs.

Eventually her belly grumbled and her face protested that it had begun to burn under the fierce morning sun.

Luna allowed a trail of Vicious Knids to show her the way to the local mess hall...where some rather delightful food perfumed the air.

Luna knocked lightly on the door, but got no answer, so she walked right in. The trail of Vicious Knids led right into the kitchen...and specifically into the plate of uneaten food sitting in front of a pale man in a dark cloak.

Luna had never eaten food favored by a Knid before...so she snatched the plate away and began to eat.

The eggs were a bit cold, but perhaps Knids liked them that way, extra rubbery?

Luna munched away...offering bits here and there to a rather affectionate quintaped – with three extra legs, otherwise known as a Fabulous Octopus – while trying to ignore all the rude shouting going on above.

Finally something did attract Luna's notice as she finished the last bit of the fry up: shouting.

"Which one of you ate my breakfast?" an angry man bellowed out. He sounded really mean. It was so bad, the quintaped began to growl.

The pale man with no nose peeked under the table and began to shout. "This little mongrel ate my food! Why, I'll...where's my wand...I've a new super-duper-evil curse I've been dying to try out..."

The quintaped began to growl and one its three extra 'legs' suddenly detached and went flying for the cloaked man's wand...in point of fact, it actually managed to eat that wizard's wand.

Luna just giggled.

Eventually a young man with black hair peered under the table. "Hi there, miss. Why have you come to join us?"

"I'm supposed to be interning."

Harry's eyes got wide. He'd heard about 'interns' before...American presidents had 'interns'...but didn't think he wanted to lose his innocence to a girl who'd sit under the breakfast table eating cold food.

That didn't show good common sense. Why...she could have just asked for a fresh plate. Harry did enjoy cooking for anyone not named Dursley.

"Well, our librarian-slash-publican should finally be waking up. He'll show you the ropes...err, maybe he would at that...he's hot to get you set up...err, he'll show you our animals."

Luna just smiled and nodded. "I like animals."

Harry left the nutty girl under the table and went back to the auctioning. Amelia Bones was bidding on her chief Auror, That Moron Rufus, when Luna heard something very...interesting.

"I bid the secrets of the Department of Mysteries..."

Luna crawled out from under the breakfast table and sat in Harry's lap. "Heliopaths?"

"Yes, a secret army."

Luna became so excited she began bouncing up and down in Harry's lap. Harry bit his tongue as the pain increased...she was grinding his twig and berries into dust.

"Goblin pies?"

"No, but I hear Cornelius did prefer house elf bon-bons."

Luna began bouncing harder. Harry was almost to the point of screaming....

"Crumple-horned snorkacks?"

"I have three to attend me in my bath tub. Perk of the job."

Luna collapsed firmly into Harry's lap from the shock of this revelation...and Harry shrieked a bit before he shoved the blonde to the floor.

"Never do that again...or we'll see if the nundu is hungry. Interns...can't kill them, err, I guess we could." Harry began to nod and plot. It took him a few minutes to calm down...and regain the sensation from his, ahem, lower body.

"Back to the auctions. Professor McGonagall had a devious gleam in her eye when she bid one mouldy boot for Dolores Umbridge. Any other bids?"

Luna got up off the floor and went exploring again. Maybe there was something interesting upstairs? If that old woman was right, Snorkacks didn't hang out in Sweden...but rather in the bathroom.

Luna felt the sudden urge to draw a bath...and wait for some snorkacks to show up.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Bill Weasley looked down at his instructions...and then he looked up again. He was in the middle of the jungle, so who would need

warding or cursebreaking skills out here? Wasn't anything to steal, was there?

He looked down at the paper again. He had portkeyed...five kilometers away from his destination. Huh?

So he had to walk five kilometers. Bill was a wizard, not a marathoner. And it was awfully hot out...but, thankfully, he was a wizard. Bill pulled out his wand, transfigured a broken branch into a comfortable, shaded divan...and then transfigured four rocks into four scantily clad, svelte golems to carry him around.

One learned a lot of interesting things working in Egypt.

Bill could probably have walked the five kilometers faster...or enchanted a twig to fly like a brook...or followed step two on his directions and sent off a Patronus messenger so someone could come with a portkey...or done pretty much anything faster, even crabwalk. But the view was fantastic as his golems toiled to carry him through the jungle. Rarr!

Just after midday, Bill arrived at what appeared to be a small village. He pulled out his letter again...and it said to go right on in.

"Alright," Bill muttered, "I'm getting fifty galleons a day and fully reimbursed expenses. Why not?"

Bill stumbled into a shambles of a bar...which had a surprisingly large collection of books lining all the walls...and then departed. He poked his head into a small church...which had a garish representation of Christ in fuschia and lavender robes hung on a cross...and his crown of thorns seemed to blink on and off, like a sign in a muggle bar...and then he visited an inn which had heart-shaped rotating beds...with mirrors above them. It seemed a den of iniquity, something so perverted only Fred and George, working together, could dream up in their twisted minds.

Eventually he decided to enter the oddest looking building of all...it looked to be at least a hundred years old, without much of a roof, and ready to collapse should someone dare sneeze inside it.

Walking inside, Bill was shocked. It was much nicer here than at the Burrow...and there was the smell of food in the air, good food.

Bill's tummy rumbled as he hadn't eaten in more than thirty-five minutes. All Weasley men needed food almost constantly.

Bill started to knock on the entry to the kitchen...but stopped, utterly flabbergasted.

His old Head of House, the hard ass McGonagall, was arm wrestling a scary looking man...sans nose...in a black cloak...and she was winning. What next? A beer chugging contest? Shots of tequila until someone passed out drunk? When had old McGonagall joined a muggle fraternity...and why were they accepting people as ugly as the guy in the hood.

Bill just watched as the scary man seemed to be winning for a few moments...before McGonagall reasserted her alpha female strength. The man's hand and wrist thudded into the table...and the man looked furious.

A black haired boy – Harry Potter? – stood up and shouted, “McGonagall wins the auction for a grand total of one arm wrestling championship and a promise to change Slytherin House's colors to pink and maroon.”

“Nooo!” the man in the black cloak howled. He'd obviously been a Slytherin at school.

A raffish man leaning against the counter in the back just laughed and said something like, “Snivellus Sucks and Always Will!”

A bookish looking man – a bit haggard at that – stepped out of the nearby pantry and fixed his sight on McGonagall. “Minerva, why in the world do you want Gregory Goyle Senior – or what's left of him?”

“He'd be better than that Inferus Albus keeps killing and reviving...plus that dreadful cat of his. As you know, the qualifications for caretaker are 1) be a living, breathing human being and 2) have



little access to magic, thus forcing you to clean on your hands and knees....”

“Why in the world,” the scholarly looking man inquired.

“Slytherin wrote that rule. Had a squib cousin he detested, but still had to employ the man. Decided to inflict the unpleasantness on everyone else...for all time.”

“Damn.”

“So...that’s why Goyle will work. He just meets the qualification for being alive...and his magic is about as weak as it could be...and still be called a wizard.”

Bill coughed...and then watched as a number of heads immediately turned toward him. The no-nosed man in the black cloak reached for a wand...but came up snarling and defenseless.

Wide-eyed Bill just stuttered out, “I’m here about the wards.”

The young man – woah! That was ickle Harrikins! – got up from the table and then walked over to Bill. “Glad you could come. Hungry? No. Then, why don’t we talk warding.... Remus, care to walk with us?”

The scholarly type followed right behind.

Bill’s old Head of House began gloating over the pale wizard in the dark robe. The other wizard standing in the back of the room was laughing like a madman.

What exactly had Bill gotten himself into? It felt like a bad episode of a television show...he felt like he might be locked in this creepy house on a stormy night and find himself a murder victim or something odd...all television seemed to be that simplistic.

Just as Bill was about to step out of view of the kitchen, his old Head of House punched the pale wizard in the dark cloak.

“Just a minor disagreement,” Harry murmured.

“Minor?”

“Well...Professor McGonagall is having to, er, relearn a lot about herself. She’s gone kinda, well, butch on us. I think if I brought firewhiskey over from the bar she might try to drink us all under the table, then rob us all in our alcohol-poisoning comas.”

Bill just nodded, a bit stunned.

“Let’s see what you can do with our nundu, huh?”

“I thought that bit was...a joke or something.”

“Don’t say that around the beastie,” Harry replied. “She doesn’t do well with those who underestimate her.”

Bill just nodded...and wondered how he was going to survive this assignment.

‘Nundu, huh?’ Bill’s mind was racing. ‘Maybe I’m not cut out for this warding business. Maybe I need to do like mum always said and settle down with a hot veela chick and start popping out sprogs, one or two a year for the next twenty years or so....’

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The auction continued over lunch. Harry made goat flambee, with roasted sweet potatoes and candied peanuts, and it surprised everyone there how good it tasted. Still, it was goat flambee.

It was a tumultuous afternoon. Hermione dropped by just after the last of the goat flambee was either eaten or thrown away – she was, after all, the smartest witch of her generation – and informed Harry about his forced participation in a dating show.

The oft-halted bidding for Rufus Scrimgeour halted again...when Harry began to bellow. “What?”

“I’ve set it up with the BBC, Harry. They’ll start filming in eight months or so.”

“What!”

“Well, you’ve singlehandedly defeated all the forces of evil fangirls, Harry, which is why I formed them up into a union in the first place. I hinted that they should name themselves Harry’s Other Trolls, or HOT, but they went with the Harry Potter Fan Club. So...the villains are defeated and now it’s time for you to get the girl...just like your standard, size six fairy tale ending.”

“I live in a jungle...and I have no intention of moving. How many girls are going to like that?”

Sirius and Remus both began to snicker and laugh. Sirius used his arms to measure out the dimensions – obscene and otherwise – of the girl he’d saved from prison so she could be his girlfriend.

“More than you’d think,” Hermione said, possessing an answer for every objection.

“I can’t dance, can I, how many girls will like a guy who can’t dance?”

Hermione suppressed a laugh. Voldemort was sitting at Harry’s kitchen table, negotiating, and Harry was scared of possibly dating and dancing with girls? Boys were weird.

“Fine. We’ll make teaching you to dance one of the weekly challenges....”

Harry turned pale and began to look around for an escape route.

“But...but...it’s a magical place. Television cameras won’t work here, not around all my pets.”

“The location scouts have already been here. They want to ‘recreate’ the camp over near those waterfalls. An excellent beautiful backdrop for the BBC’s new smash hit.”

Harry swayed a bit before almost collapsing. Even Amelia Bones was laughing now.

“Even Superman fell before Kryptonite. Who knew Harry was allergic to dating?” Hermione loved it when a plan came together.

She’d make sure Harry found a good match...and she’d watch as Ron turned into a spluttering, jealous moron, just perfect for rebuilding.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Morton Throckmorton Aloysius Ottoman Pendergast Biedermeier Jones VIII, recently appointed by his daddy as editor of the newspaper the family had owned for 200 years, hadn’t gotten anything from Skeeter in quite some time. He decided to portkey off to Africa to see what there was to see. He’d write a damned story on Potter himself if he needed to.

The portly twenty-two year old man landed with a thump in the middle of a clearing. With a great deal of wheezing and sweating, he managed to follow the path into an odd sort of village. Voices on wind told him where the interesting things were happening in this town.

Morton crept up to the open window of the only house in the village and pulled out a Dictating Quill.

“...the gentleman from Little Hangleton? No more bids, then? Highest bid is from McGonagall, one dragon skeleton, one liter of acromantula bile, and one box of...er, rotten apple cores. Madam Bones, are you sure you don’t want to increase the Ministry’s bid?”

“Not at this time.”

“Fine, Madam Umbridge’s auction fails. No one meets the minimum reserve price. I guess I’ll have to see if she likes tending to my fish...or perhaps that collection of poisonous toads that I’ve arranged for.”

Amelia Bones began to laugh. Morton Jones knew that laugh well. It was the laugh he'd heard the last time he'd been caught out in Knockturn Alley flashing the hags...his wares. Dreadful harridan...no one should be able to laugh like that when they were arresting a proud, naked man. The sound should be respectful...or even awed...or perhaps sheer lust?

Morton Jones resolved to get to the bottom of this, to expose it...and to make sure Amelia Bones never laughed at anyone else, for any reason.

They were auctioning off people in there...Umbridge, another one who laughed at Morton's artistic attempts in Knockturn Alley.

Jones wasn't against slavery per se, but he didn't like women who laughed. So he'd pursue this story to the ends of this earth. He'd run Amelia Bones the Laugher into the ground.

This story was so good he wouldn't even need to lie. He could just publish the truth under Skeeter's byline, make sure everyone thought it was a lie, and then.... Hold up, there was a flaw in his logic. Where had he gone wrong?

True story, check.

Published under Skeeter's name, check.

People believe it's false, but amusing, causes disruption inside Ministry as people laugh about it...hold up. That wasn't the result Morton Jones wanted. He wanted people in prison, rotting, never able to laugh again.

Hmm, how to use Skeeter's name to get this story out, then? What would Rita do?

Rita's strategy would be to take a true story, twist it into a half dozen lies, and then somehow get people to believe her ridiculous lies. That sounded better.

But how to do it without Rita's distorted mind present to help?

Take a true story and twist it into lies...hmm, Morton was on the right track, but how to do it? What was more salacious than Harry Potter, Amelia Bones, and company auctioning off Ministry personnel in the Congo?

Rita looked for scandals...and love stories...and tales of public figures going mad. Hmm, perhaps Morton Jones could review Rita's old columns and make something about that horrible Amelia Bones.

Some kind of massive orgy in the jungle?

Or a corrupt scheme to kidnap Ministry officials for ransom, spearheaded by the Ministry's top law enforcement officer?

Or...

Wow, Morton was shocked. It was pretty easy to make this crap up. Excellent! Morton Jones had feared it would be hard to do what Rita did...but it wasn't. A little lie here; a lot of fabrication there; tied up with sass and vitriol.

Yes, that is exactly what Rita would do.

A pure formula for success!

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Harry wiped the sweat from his forehead. Making eight pans of goat lasagna (with fresh goat cheese) was a hot, messy business...but he had to feed a lot of people. Remus plus his new girl; Sirius plus his new girl; Fred and George; a whole lot of prisoners, including the batshit crazy Ginny Weasley; McGonagall; Voldemort; Madam Bones; that crazy intern who kept sitting on his family jewels; crazy, plotting Hermione; and now the former players from two Quidditch teams.

(Thankfully the yetis fed Lucius Malfoy and their other captives whatever they had on hand, mostly leaves and bugs. And the

Congolese Black fed Snape whatever roasted, burnt bits they had left over from their feasting.)

Everyone wanted something...but Harry was still stuck with the most worthless of the prisoners.

He'd thought the auction a good idea, but it was a mess. McGonagall only wanted a new near-squib caretaker and DADA teacher. Amelia Bones had only pursued a few of the better Aurors and had 'mysteriously' failed to bid high enough to win either Fudge, Umbridge, Percy Weasley, or any of the other executives of the Ministry.

No one had bid on Arthur or Ginny Weasley...it was sorta sad.

What was Harry going to do with so many useless people at his Magical Creature Ranch?

Harry sighed and put the third and fourth pans of lasagna into the oven.

He needed to think.

He just wanted to live his life. How to get things back to normal? Harry didn't want more invaders...more Dark Lords popping in for torture and tea...more teachers demanding he return to school...more Ministry flunkies pushing paperwork at him.

Harry had a job now, a fun one, and he had some good people living here.

What to do? What to do....

Whatever it was needed to be a total solution. No more auctioning off this person and that person. He needed a neat, all encompassing solution...something creative.

Maybe Sirius or Remus would have an idea...something memorable.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Nine Months Later

Hettie Bogrash – formerly known as Perenelle Flamel – was bored in her realtor's office in Diagon Alley. She hadn't sold a piece of property in a month. Perhaps it was time to get into a new side venture: travel sales, perhaps?

The Daily Prophet had put out the most wonderful stories about a new wizarding theme park called Snorkack World...she needed to take her husband on a vacation, perhaps start signing up others to travel to the exclusive theme park.

The brochure looked promising. Hettie could sell a hundred trips to parents of children interested in having breakfast with Handy Dandy the Occamy and his girlfriend Citrina the Full-Bodied Erumpent.

Plus they had the largest publicly viewable animal preserves in the world. And the most diverse crew of animal keepers ever assembled.

She read the brochure again...and smiled. This was a surefire way to earn money.

She'd just have to talk Nick into it...er, Augustus...er, what the hell was his new name? Trellis, perhaps? All this changing confused her. Cockrot, her husband Cockrot.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The portkey was as gentle as Hettie had ever felt. Her husband had been forced by the goblins to remain behind and work in the dragon pits, but Hettie wasn't too concerned. The man who could make a Philosopher's Stone could do anything.

Hettie had a huge smile on her face. She'd been asking around for the last few days and no one had anything other than great things to say about Snorkack World.

Hettie looked around at her landing spot: a beautiful waterfall in the foreground, a beautiful golden tent off to her left, and a large,



comforting storefront off to the right. Hettie moved toward the golden tent: Welcome to Snorkack World.

Once inside, massively powerful cooling charms kicked in. The room looked like it was out of an immaculate hotel: marble desks and beautiful women from all over the world.

“Checking in?” a beautiful black woman asked. She seemed happy to work at a place like this...unlike that odd looking freckled, ginger haired man scowling next to her. (Had Hettie paid attention, she would have discovered everyone just called him the Weasel.)

“Yes. Reservation for Hettie Bogrash, two nights.”

“Of course. You’ll be staying in room 1045 of the Hogwarts Center for Jungle Studies....”

“Hogwarts is involved in this?”

“Oh, yes, I don’t know the whole story, but the first edition of Snorkacks: A History just arrived in the gift shop. It’s supposed to be a fascinating story...all the compromises that went into the building of this place.”

“Does Hogwarts teach classes here?”

“Absolutely. You can sign up for practicals in Care of Magical Creatures, Herbology, or four other fields. We have the world’s largest free-standing Devil’s Snare, over four hectares in size.”

Hettie just smiled and nodded.

“Here is your booklet with all of your options here. The Snake House just opened and it’s quite popular. The Quidditch Stadium has a daily game at four o’clock; today the Auguries are playing a visiting team from America. The magical rides – Into the Waterfall, Flying with Dragons (my personal favorite), Name That Magical Crossbreed, When Nundus Attack, River Boat Voyage, Kurtz’s Haunted Shack, the Snake House Plunge, the Philosopher’s Stone Gauntlet, Battle with a Basilisk, the TriWizard Travesty, and the others – are less busy

in the mornings and late evenings. Finally, the Harry Potter Fertility Shrine and Meditation Center....”

“What?”

“Yes, the Harry Potter Fan Club established it on the property. It’s open for visits from ten to four daily.”

“I don’t understand,” Hettie said. She assumed Potter was dead. After all, she’d given away his location to a bunch of mercenary goblins.

“The twenty foot tall anatomically proportionate statue is the main attraction. Potter only modeled for it under duress, but it’s...quite nice, if you get my meaning. I sometimes take my lunch down there and stare at it for an hour or two....”

Hettie went pale.

“Who built Snorkack World?”

“Well, it’s a long story, but the founder is Harry Potter....”

Hettie fainted dead away.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Hettie woke up later that day and had no idea where she was. The beautiful room she woke up in – complete with a lively, happy, smiling cartoon occamy painted on the inside of her door – finally prompted a memory or two: she was at Harry Potter’s Snorkack World.

She lurched out of bed and felt nauseous again. All her plotting had failed. She’d sent Potter into the jungle to die; she’d told the goblins about it to make sure all his enemies and all the boy’s overzealous ‘supporters’ knew about it.

No one got the better of Hettie Bogrash! No one. She was just going to have to sabotage this whole disastrous concept.

Hettie got dressed and made it downstairs in near record time. When she arrived, there was an odd girl talking to a group of people. Hettie was trying to push through to get to the restaurant, but just a few moments of listening forced Hettie to stand there, open mouthed, listening.

“...Nargle-free zone. We’re still building two more hotels based on where the Sprinkles told me to put them. The Dragon’s Horde will open in three months and the Thunderbird’s Aerie will open a few weeks after that. The Hogwarts Centre will remain our premiere education and living facility, however. Any questions about accommodations at this time?”

Hettie couldn’t help herself. “Excuse me, miss, but I missed your name.”

“I’m Luna Lovegood, Executive Vice President for Customer Experience.”

Hettie knew the Lovegoods. She felt like puking. This crazy girl was an executive vice president? She probably wasn’t even qualified to be an intern.

Hettie tried to slink away, but the crazy blonde girl latched onto Hettie. “Oh no, ma’am, you need to finish off the V.I.P. tour. All potential investors need to see the inner workings of Snorkack World.”

“I take it you named the place, then?”

“Of course.”

Hettie was seething inside. She had mayhem to plan and unleash...and she was being forced to walk around the park with a bunch of potential investors. Who would ever be so stupid as to invest in a place like this?

“And here is Sybil Trelawney, ladies and gentlemen, the Hogwarts Teacher in Residence....”

“Who teaches Divination at Hogwarts then?” One of the battier women in the crowd asked that.

“Headmistress McGonagall used a generous donation from the Harry Potter Foundation to transition the main campus from Divination and Muggle Studies to Living with the Non-Magical and Starting Your Own Business: Basic Entrepreneurish and Beginning Arcane Magics. Professor Trelawney is now Chief Curator of Useless Magical Artifacts, such as crystal balls and Tarot cards.”

Trelawney pointed at Hettie Bogrash, clutched at her throat, and began speaking in a bizarre voice. “The one with devilish eyes approaches....”

That was when Luna silenced her with a spell. “I know you can’t help it, Professor, but these nice investors don’t need to hear more of your tripe. You tried this three times last week...you’re just so lonely. Perhaps if you would speak with the Chifurples that live in your new tower, you’d be less miserable. I arranged for them special, just for you....”

Hettie followed behind the group barely able to think. A tour guided by Luna Lovegood was three parts incomprehension, followed by two parts uncomfortable truths, capped off with one part ridiculous beasts no one had ever heard of before.

The group passed by line after line at the park on their way to the Snake House and the newest ride at the park, the Snake House Plunge.

Hettie followed the other idiots into the Snake House...and screamed when she saw the attendant inside one of the snake enclosures.

“It’s the Dark Lord....”

The other potential investors turned to look and merely nodded. Luna Lovegood, however, wasn’t amused. “Didn’t you read the investor packet before arriving? Of course, the retired Dark Lord is at Snorkack World. It was a condition of the contract he signed to end the war.”

“Contract? War?”

“Dark Lords start wars...of course. They wouldn't be Dark Lords if they just went around selling cotton candy, you understand. And...well, the story is quite involved. There are goats, and dragons, a few yetis, of course (no good story can leave out the yetis), a basilisk, a corkscrew, a quintaped, a whole bunch of spiders, several scantily clad witches, and a dating show starring Harry Potter....”

“That made no sense,” Hettie protested. But the other potential investors seemed to be following along.

“Fine, read the book. I wrote the first draft of Snorkacks: A History myself. Now, back to the Snake House. As you can see, the lead attendant is currently checking on the health of our boomslangs. The occamy are in the next room over...”

“Excuse me,” a demure blonde woman asked. “But what is the ‘attendant’ doing to that snake?”

“Well, it was written into his contract that he had to verify the intestinal integrity of all the larger snakes, pythons and such, with a Wormtail device. The device....”

“You mean a rat with a silver paw mounted on a semi-flexible stick?”

“Yes, quite. The Wormtail device is pushed inside the snake's mouth and down the length of its body once per month to ensure proper digestion....”

Most of the potential investors seemed to think the idea sound.

“What happens if the rat gets bitten?” Hettie asked.

“He does all the time. But he's really an animagus, of course, so we can dose him with an extremely painful anti-venom...and he survives just fine. Whimpers a lot, though.”

“Only once a month?”

“Every snake once a month. We have almost four thousand here. The attendant just barely has time to finish up one cycle before he has to start over again....”

Hettie began to pale again. That sounded like torture, like something out of Greek mythology, a truly terribly fate. Equivalent to being made immortal, but having your liver torn out daily, only for it to regrow over night. Why did no one else see it?

“Let’s move on to the Plunge. It’s the only way to exit the Snake House.”

Against her will, Hettie enjoyed the massive magical rollercoaster. First it went way up high, far higher than should have been possible inside a small building like the Snake House, then it dropped everyone right into an environment with the occamies, the flying snakes hissed and threatened to bite, but the ride swerved back up and out of danger at the last second. The rest of the house got second visits...and then came the Plunge! The ride chucked off each person, one by one, into a long spiraling glass tube that seemed to go on for a kilometer. When Hettie reached the end, she landed in a massive tank of water...roiling with a hundred sea serpents of various sizes from massive to ‘please save me now.’

Just a moment before she was about to be attacked, Hettie found herself, perfectly dry, sitting in a deep, comfortable, leather couch...in a room just off the entrance to the Snake House. She’d never been here before...and had no idea how she’d gotten here.

That ride was some kind of magic. Illusions? But illusions so real they felt terrifying and exciting and completely real. How could this place do that? Or was it all real? Had they created a muggle style track up in the darkness of the ceiling? How? How!

“How do you do that,” Hettie asked as soon as she laid eyes on Luna.

“Trade secret. Harry invented the process....”

“This Harry is, what, fifteen? How can we trust a fifteen year old to develop something like this...something that’s completely safe?”

“It’s safe, Ms. Bogrash,” Luna said. Hettie shut up for a moment. She had never mentioned her name to this group.

“Let’s keep walking. To your right is our goat pavilion, tended to by the retired Hogwarts Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore...”

“Dumbledore is a goat caretaker now,” Hettie blurted out.

Luna just rolled her eyes and kept the group moving.

“To your right is our highly secure nundu enclosure. The lead janitor is currently removing some of the detritus....”

Hettie looked over...and saw the Minister of Magic scowling as he pushed a wheelbarrow filled with...manure.

“Dare I ask why Cornelius Fudge is doing that job?”

“Part of the contract,” Luna said, in a sing-song voice.

“Can I see a copy of this contract?”

“I put it in Snorkacks: A History.”

“Where do they sell it?”

“We’ll visit the pub-slash-library-slash-main gift shop in a few hours. Can you hold out until then?”

“Fine,” Hettie muttered.

“Excellent. Next stop is Spider Village!”

Hettie’s skin began to crawl. The further she got into the place, the more disturbed she was. Dolores Umbridge was used in a demonstration of what happened to people attacked by deadly spiders. Every fifteen minutes thousands of spiders attacked her.

Hettie didn't think it was possible for her to become any paler.

Mosquito Marsh left her stung, while everyone else in the group was untouched. Just her and a former Auror named Dawlish (who was now a gate attendant and guard).

The Werewolf Retreat: A Medical Clinic was a bit of a medical marvel. Two or three werewolves a day from all over came to lose their affliction. Rufus Scrimgeour seemed particularly unhappy reduced to a role as an orderly.

The group stopped and ate at Lakeside Laconics. The river was a bit terrifying to watch, as it was clearly filled with lethal serpents and biting fish. But she saw young witches and wizards enthralled everywhere she looked; they weren't scared of scary things. Some even threw in bits of food to watch the swarming of the deadly fish in the water.

A perverse form of entertainment if she'd ever seen one.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, we're on the tail end of our tour. But we have a couple more stops. We have a custom clothing and hair dressing shop which we should stop in."

Lucius Malfoy was styling some woman's hair...and Narcissa Malfoy was helping an obese woman into a new muumuu.

"He's a respected member of the wizarding community. What's he doing styling hair?" Hettie asked.

Luna looked around, spotted Lucius, and nodded. "Oh, him. He ran an illegal business with his wife. Harry didn't like the fact that Lucius was making anatomically proportionate dolls of him...and selling them to the public. Plus he was a Death Eater. So, Harry talked the yeti's into letting Lucius work during the day before returning to the yetis in the evening. Narcissa certainly seems happier, too. She doesn't have to share her hair products any longer.... Moving right along, follow me,"



Hettie shook her head but kept on walking.

“Here is the Temple of Time. We’ve created it as a wonderful ride. You download a memory and then you get to relive it again, but change anything you want. Be careful with it...it can be upsetting...or cause euphoria. We only allow guests to visit this place once per day for an hour, just like the limitation on most modern time turners.”

That did sound intriguing to Hettie. “I suppose it’s also a trade secret?”

Luna shrugged. “No, not really. Harry traded with a local shaman for a battered old book. That book had this spell in it...so we built this particular attraction. Nearly seventy percent of everybody who comes here visits this ride...a higher ratio than almost any other ride. But it’s the least visited overall since people can only visit it once per day. It’s something special.”

Hettie was definitely visiting this ride. It sounded like a souped-up pensieve, an incredible sort of thing done with a spell and not a rune-scribed bowl.

“Out there in the field,” Luna said, “is where a Muggle television program is taping a show. Harry has to choose one girl to date from a pool of thirty-six. It was supposed to be twelve, but a whole bunch of countries complained they weren’t being represented. So, Miss Witch China, the Russian Ministerial Beauty, the five finalists in the Best Witch Brazil competition, the Miss Sweden Bikini Waxing Champion, plus Miss Salem Institute, Miss Beauxbatons, Miss Witch Cape Town, and a selection of the most beautiful witches in all of Britain are competing for a date from Harry.”

It wasn’t fair. Hettie had sent Harry off to die...but now he was dating thirty-plus young witches. No! The inhumanity of it; the shame of it!

Still, like eyes toward a dragon mauling, Hettie turned to look at the television taping. Harry sat by himself inside the largest gazebo she’d ever seen (three stories, with a pool on the east side, and a waterslide from the third floor). A gaggle of girls, in skimpy bikinis,

surrounded the front of the building, while a bushy-haired witch clobbered a red-haired and red-faced boy in the rear.

It wasn't fair. It wasn't right.

"The gift shop is right through here. That side is completely dedicated to the products grown and harvested here. It seems they are running a special on Devil's Snare clippings and Augurey down. Over here is our new pub. Library's through that door on the right. And the gifts are just over there, including the first copies of Snorkacks: A History."

Hettie almost jogged over to purchase that book. She wanted to know how Potter had survived in the jungle...and built the world's largest wizarding theme park.

She paid four galleons for the book and then started devouring it. Question after question answered itself: how the Quidditch teams arrived here; where all the animals came from; how Potter survived...then came the chapter on "The Partition."

After an unsuccessful auction to restore the Order, the Ministry, and the Dark Forces with their captured forces, Harry proved his leadership skills by negotiating a master agreement. Cornelius Fudge and his lackeys were convicted in open court of illegally declaring war on the sovereign city of Kicked-Your-Ass, the Congo; each was sentenced to forty years of hard labor.

Likewise, Albus Dumbledore and his entire Order of the Phoenix were sentenced to forty years, although Harry Potter granted pardons to everyone save Albus Dumbledore.

Finally, the Dark Lord Voldemort and his Death Eaters were given life sentences.

The final decision was where to put the prisoners to work. A representative of Hogwarts suggested opening a salt mine...and to utilize the prisoners for hard labor. A Ministry representative suggested the new convicts should be set to recycling Ministry memoranda. A Dark Forces representative suggested that the

convicted should be set to killing things, such as fluffy bunny rabbits, those weaker than themselves, or clowns and mimes.

Harry Potter' godfather, the rakish Sirius Black, proposed that Harry Potter should ensure that the prisoners earn a profit.

The three initial ideas were thrown out the window.

After discussing and dismissing ideas for installing a deadly nuclear facility in the Congo, an illicit drug processing plant, a massive compost heap, and a plastics factory mass producing toys for McDonald's Happy Meals, the conversation turned to ripping off DisneyWorld.

Harry Potter then announced that every crime committed in I've-Won-You-Bastards, The Congo, will be punished by indentured servitude at the amusement park....

Hettie stopped reading there.

Luna was gathering up all the potential investors around her. There was a short, black haired young man standing next to her. Was that Potter?

Hettie tried to sneak out of the gift shop, but she didn't get far. A powerful hand snagged her shoulder.

"I don't think you're going anywhere, Hettie."

That wasn't the voice of the same boy Hettie had sent into the jungle...but it was Harry Potter nonetheless.

"You're supposed to stay with the potential investors' group, ma'am," the young man said.

"I refuse to invest my money in a place like this."

"Fine with me. You see, you'll be investing your time, a lot of your time, here over the next forty years.... You see, we eventually figured out how so many people knew where I was. Goblins sold the

information you wanted sold, but they also told my agents where they got it from in the first place. They're tricky like that."

"...Forty years?"

"Attempted murder carries that sort of penalty. We'd never have bothered going after you, but then you decided to come down and see what it was all about."

"No. Trellis, my husband, needs me. I can't be away from him for forty years...."

"Write him a note. If he comes down and commits a crime here, we can ensure he gets 40 years as well."

Hettie reached for her wand...which Harry promptly snatched from her. "Excellent. Very thoughtful, too, you'll get this back in forty years, ma'am."

"No! No....."

"We've got the perfect spot for you. One of our pavilions on magical sciences will open next week. We call it: The Alchemical Life: Make Your Own Philosopher's Stone in Thirty Minutes or the Next One's Free....."

Hettie collapsed to the floor. In her despair, she hissed out, "The horror! The horror!"

"...of course, it's non-functional, but extremely pretty. I didn't want to sacrifice a whole bunch of my dragons just so we could put a real heart in every stone. Waste of time, if you ask me."

"Horror," Hettie mumbled. "Horror!"

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

My apologies for ripping off Rorschach's Blot, every Evil!Dumbledore fic ever written, Joseph Conrad, Indiana Jones, Snakes on a Plane, Princess Bride, stupid dating shows on television, Dr. Strangelove,

Network, The Simpsons, Clue, and all the other wacky comedies I like. I hope you enjoyed this little story.

The End